

*The "Irish Play" Series*

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# **HUT 42**

*By*

***John B. Keane***

***General Editor--Robert Hogan***

**PROSCENIUM PRESS**

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P.O. Box 561

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## ***About the Author***

No Irish dramatist since Brendan Behan has made such an impact on the Irish people as has John B. Keane. He was born on July 21, 1928, in Listowel, Co. Kerry, which was also the birthplace of George Fitzmaurice, Maurice Walsh, and Bryan MacMahon. Save for a stint as a laborer in England — an experience mirrored in HUT 42 — he has lived most of his life in Listowel, where he owns a public-house. He has written eleven plays, of which the best known are the extremely popular SIVE, SHARON'S GRAVE and MANY YOUNG MEN OF TWENTY (both of which were recently published by the University of Minnesota Press in the volume SEVEN IRISH PLAYS), THE YEAR OF THE HIKER, and THE FIELD. He has also written a biography SELF PORTRAIT, a book of essays STRONG TEA, a volume of verse THE STREET, and a political satire LETTERS OF A SUCCESSFUL T. D.

His plays are noted for their lilting songs, the colorful vigor of their characters and dialogue, and their boldly treated themes. As I have elsewhere remarked of him, "The Dublin critics have often charged that Keane's plays are melodramatic. They are, for life in Kerry is still melodramatic. Melodrama is their value and their strength."

R. H.

## CAST

IDRIS MORTIMER, a Welshman

SKYLIGHT MAGINTY, an Irishman

THE DEACON, an Englishman

BILL ROOT, an Irishman

CLEMENT O'SHAUGHNESSY, an Irishman

MR. ATKINSON, an Englishman

MISS BUTT, an English woman

DARBY HOGAN, an Irishman

The time is the present, and the place is the North of England.

The play was first produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on November 12, 1962.

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## ACT ONE

Action takes place in the small recreation-room of a six-bed hostel in a large construction job in the north of England.

In the room there is a stove near the backwall, a table, some chairs, and a radiogram with cabinet. Some prints hang on the walls.

It is the late evening of a June day.

Two men are seated near the stove, one reading a newspaper, the other putting a patch on an old work-pants. The one reading the newspaper is IDRIS MORTIMER, a Welshman of about 40 or so. The man mending the trousers is SKYLIGHT MAGINTY, an Irishman in his forties.

IDRIS: Skylight! . . . Skylight!

SKYLIGHT: Eh!

IDRIS: You know what's entered here over two miles at Cracknick? — Severn Trumpeter! It's Hobnell's only mount at the meeting. Come two hundred miles to ride him. Didn't come for the good of his health, Skylight; you can bet your shirt on that . . . He's a sure thing, he is! . . . Good combination that! — Johnny Hobnell and Severn Trumpeter.

SKYLIGHT: That nag!

IDRIS: That's no nag! That's a powerful horse, boy . . . jump a house he would, if he had to!

SKYLIGHT: My Grannie's been dead twenty years now, Idris.

IDRIS: Aah! Sorry I am to hear that, Skylight, boy.

SKYLIGHT: Well, you know the mound on her grave, Idris?

IDRIS: Aye, aye, Skylight! . . . Aye!

SKYLIGHT: Gone down somewhat in twenty years, Idris, hasn't it?

IDRIS: Twenty years . . . oh, surely sunk by now . . . poor old dear!

SKYLIGHT: Well, you know Severn Trumpeter, Idris . . . he couldn't jump that mound, not if his frigg'in' life depended on it.

IDRIS: Tell you what, Skylight! Thirty-two shillings we got, isn't it? I tell you, boy. I've got a feeling about this horse. Let's take the thirty-two shillings, Skylight, and have sixteen shillings each way on Severn Trumpeter.

SKYLIGHT: Not a hope! What do we do for smokes and a few pints? We haven't started work yet. Who's going to give us a sub or do you want to spend the rest of the week without a smoke?

IDRIS: You know the old saying — "Nothing venture, nothing gain!" Think o' that, Skylight, let you . . . and I've got a feeling about this horse!

SKYLIGHT: Tell you what we'll do, Idris. First pay-day we'll invest a tenner in cross-doubles.

IDRIS: Aye, but what about Severn Trumpeter? He's not going to be galloping every day.

SKYLIGHT: There will be other horses, Idris.

IDRIS: There's a chap here on the site making a book. Take anything up to two pounds.

Here, there is a knock at the door. IDRIS and SKYLIGHT exchange looks.

SKYLIGHT: See who it is!

(IDRIS rises, and goes to doorway.)

IDRIS: Who's out, eh? Who iss there?

SKYLIGHT: Open the door and tell them to come in.

(IDRIS opens the door.)

IDRIS: Come in, let you, boy! Come in!

(Enter an immaculately-dressed man of thirty or so. He wears a Homburg hat, a tight-fitting well-tailored black coat, and white silk scarf. He is moustached—but ever so slightly. He carries a new leather suitcase. He looks about the room with some signs of distaste, and deposits his bag. He is THE DEACON.)

DEACON (London accent): 'Ut forty-two?

SKYLIGHT: That's right!

DEACON: What you two in for?

SKYLIGHT: Plumber! . . . He's my mate, Idris Mortimer!

DEACON: Taffy, eh? . . . You Taffy, too?

SKYLIGHT: Irish! I'll tell you something, though, and it's a Gospel fact. The last chap that called me "Paddy," I biffed him with a foot of lead pipin' and he spent a week in hospital.

IDRIS: That's a true story, boy . . . same chap can't eat no toffees . . . nothing but jelly-sweets.

DEACON: Awright, if that's the way it is. What's the name, then?

SKYLIGHT: Skylight Maginty.

DEACON: Just call me Deacon. And don't stand up . . . don't stand up!

(DEACON takes off his hat and hands it to IDRIS who accepts it. He takes off coat and scarf and hands same to IDRIS. He wears a sort of boiler-suit otherwise.)

DEACON: Put those away, like a good chap.

IDRIS: Yes, my Lord! . . . Nice piece of material . . . set you back a fair penny, I bet.

(IDRIS takes hat and coat and scarf to other door and exits.)

SKYLIGHT: In there's the dormitory — six beds.

DEACON: You the only chaps arrived yet?

SKYLIGHT: Yes! . . . What do you do?

DEACON: Bricklayer! . . . (Looks around cautiously.) Anybody abaht?

SKYLIGHT: It's all right!

DEACON: Not a proper bricklayer, see, but I get by. Can't do corners.

SKYLIGHT: What about the foreman?

DEACON: Well, every time I come to a corner, I knock it off and go to the lav.

SKYLIGHT: Money's good here. Thirty a week and overtime.

(Enter Idris.)

IDRIS: Put your things on the bed, Deacon, boy. Deacon — very peculiar name, that! Cousin of mine, Jethro Morgan from Abergavenny, was a Deacon.

Chapel he was. Any harm to ask, is it, what your denomination might be?

DEACON: African missions!

IDRIS: Eh!

DEACON: I was on a good thing, I can tell you, all dressed up as a parson. Call on old ladies and tell 'em all about my missionary work in Uganda. Worth a fiver every time. (Mimics the person in sanctimonious tones): Ah, good-evening, dear sister. Let me introduce myself. The Reverend Montague Fitzpelligory, Deacon of Koolala, province of Uganda. Yes, yes, my dear old lady — savages, lions and tigers, 'ead 'unters, cannibals and witch-doctors, snakes and elephants and water-buffalo . . . temperature at boiling point . . . still, we mustn't complain, dear sister. Pity the poor converts — naked, starving, thirsting for the Word, thirsting for the true faith, crying out in the wilderness for the Evangelist. In nomine patris, et filis, et spiritus

sanctus . . . Awmen! (Pause. Then with a sudden crescendo): Amen! Amen! I say to you! I say to you that the Holy Spirit gnashes his jaws in anger. Give. I say to you! Give to appease the wrath of the Father. 'E that with-holdeth 'is purse shall perish in the everlasting pit but 'e that giveth shall be multiplied.

(IDRIS and SKYLIGHT applaud.)

DEACON: I was on a bloody flamin' good thing. Often had the old ladies in 'ysterics.

SKYLIGHT: Why d'you jack it up?

DEACON: Well, it was like this! (Confidentially): One old lady wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury saying as 'ow I should be promoted to Bishop . . . Eighteen months with time off for good behaviour . . . 'ope you blokes don't mind a chap as did time.

SKYLIGHT: That's all right! Idris and I were inside.

DEACON: Wot for?

SKYLIGHT: We were young then, didn't know any better, and work was scarce.

IDRIS: Very nice occupation. Very pleasant. Me and Skylight go along to White City, see. Watch a chap having a tenner on a dog. Follow him down to the winning post. Skylight stand one side of him, I do the other. Very excited, see, at finish. Everybody jumping about, cheering and shouting and slapping each other on backs. If chap's dog is winning, I lean across to Skylight and shake hands. Skylight lifts the chap's ticket. Easy job. Chap always carried ticket in here! (Tips lapel pocket.) Skylight runs back to collect. Me — I get heart-attack, very severe, fall into chap's arms and moan like this. (Moans loudly.) Chap can't very well leave me there to die. Chap get excited and call a few bystanders. Hurry off then to collect his money. Chap's too late — Skylight have collected already. Me — I get better. Meet Skylight after in the "Goose and Gander" in Cricklewood and divvy up.

DEACON: Well, that is beautiful, that is! My 'eartiest congratulations! (He shakes hands with both.) But 'ow d'you get nabbed?

IDRIS: Bloody punter, proper gangster 'e was, passed a dud tenner to the book-maker. Chap from Scotland Yard waitin' for Skylight. Me — I went back to see what was keepin' Skylight.

DEACON: 'Ard luck!

IDRIS: Six month's holidays. Plenty of time for meditation. Never do anything like that again.

(There is a knock at the door.)

IDRIS: Come in! Come in!

(Enter a man of fifty-five or sixty. He wears an old Gabardine coat and cap and carries a large suitcase which is well corded and strapped to hold it together. He is BILL ROOT.)

ROOT: Hut forty-two?

SKYLIGHT: That's right! Come on in! . . . (Surveys him critically for a while.) . . . Bill Root! I didn't know you there for a minute. Don't you remember me, Skylight Maginty? (ROOT looks a bit puzzled.) You gave me my first sub, man, I was only a kid and I hadn't a tosser. It was in Luton. I hadn't a fag and I hadn't a penny for grub, but you gave me a quid.

ROOT: I can't place you!

SKYLIGHT: But you must! You were the only decent man on that job. I didn't know you from Adam at the time and you didn't know me, but, by God, you



gave a young fellow a pound when he hadn't a friend in the world and that's a thing Skylight Maginty never forgets. You still can't remember me?  
**ROOT** (Tired and not caring a great deal): No! No! I can't place you. Where's the beds?

**SKYLIGHT**: In there! . . . This is Idris Mortimer! Idris, meet Bill Root.  
(They shake hands.)

**SKYLIGHT**: Long since you've been home? You used to go home twice in the year always.

**ROOT**: I only go at Christmas now, for a week.

**SKYLIGHT**: I know that! How many kids . . . ten . . . twelve? You had a lot.

**ROOT**: Fourteen.

**SKYLIGHT**: You still send home the registered envelope every week?

**ROOT**: Yes . . . yes . . . always! Is it in there the beds is?

**SKYLIGHT**: Yes, straight in! (Flexes eyes regretfully with fingers.) Fix him up, Idris.

**IDRIS** (Leading the way): And will you be having breakfast in bed, sir?

**SKYLIGHT**: Cut it out, Idris!

(**ROOT** exits.)

**IDRIS**: What did I say?

**SKYLIGHT**: You should have known him when I knew him. There was a great man there . . . a big man . . . only the years caught up with him.

**IDRIS**: Sorry! . . . I didn't know! I'll make it up to him. (Exits **IDRIS**.)

**SKYLIGHT**: Poor old man! Left Ireland when he couldn't make a decent wage. Labourer. Lucky if he earns twelve quid a week at his age.

**DEACON**: 'Aven't you Irish got anything at 'ome?

**SKYLIGHT**: Oh, sure! We've got churches in every village that cost a hundred thousand quid, but there's no money for factories.

(Enter **ROOT**, followed by an intrigued **IDRIS**.)

**ROOT**: Where's the vessel?

**DEACON**: What?

**ROOT**: There's no vessel in here, an' I have bad kidneys.

**IDRIS**: You'll have to go to the toilet. It's just outside the door.

(Exit **ROOT** hurriedly.)

**DEACON**: Well, every Irishman I've met wants to go back. If it's really like that, why bother?

**SKYLIGHT**: Because it's our home! Because it's where we were born and no matter how much we criticize it, we love it — we love the cursed spot, and that's all we think about from mornin' till night — a cushy job in Ireland, or makin' a pile here, enough not to have to worry about a job when we get back. Don't you see, we hate this country . . . hate it! You're foreigners to us and you always will be. You're as different from us as chalk is from cheese.

**DEACON**: Well, at least you're honest about it, anyway.

**SKYLIGHT**: It's nothing against you, you understand. It's just the thought of having to spend the rest of our lives in a country we can never love.

(Enters **ROOT**.)

**ROOT**: Any place around here a fellow could buy an oul' gallon?

**IDRIS**: Not allowed in the Hostel — part o' the Rules.

**ROOT**: I know that, but I used to put a few newspapers around it, and stick a few flowers into it, and they always thought it was a flowerpot.

**SKYLIGHT:** We'll pick up something tomorrow on the job.

**IDRIS:** Why don't you open a window?

**ROOT:** I tried them. They're too high up!

**DEACON:** Stand on something!

**ROOT:** I tried it but I can't do the two things together.

**SKYLIGHT:** What two things?

**ROOT:** I have to keep my balance as well.

**SKYLIGHT:** Go on to bed. We'll help you for tonight, but mind you get that bloody tin tomorrow. Call out when you get into trouble and one of us will go in and lift you up.

**ROOT:** Thanks, lads! May God reward you! I'll call out if I want one of ye. Good-night!

(Exit **ROOT**.)

**IDRIS** (Taking up his paper again): Eh, Skylight! What say, Skylight, we just hev two shillings each way?

**SKYLIGHT:** You heard what I said — Pay-day!

**IDRIS:** How about one shilling each way, then?

**SKYLIGHT:** If you want your half of the money you can have it.

**IDRIS:** No! No! I was only suggesting. Ever have a little flutter, Mr. Deacon?

**DEACON:** I can take 'em, or leave 'em!

**IDRIS:** There's a beautiful little racehorse going here by the name of Severn Trumpeter, nine stone over two miles and believe me, Mr. Deacon, there's nothing to beat him and he's one hundred to nine — Severn Trumpeter.

**DEACON:** No, thank you! Not for me! You ever see a bookie's wife wot didn't 'ave a fur coat an' a posh car? Know 'oo pays the lot? The punter, 'at's 'oo. You an' me, chum.

**IDRIS:** How right you are, Mr. Deacon!

**DEACON:** Now 'at's wot I'd like to be some day, a Bookmaker. (**IDRIS** and **SKYLIGHT** exchange worried glances.) If things isn't workin' out, wot's to stop a chap skedaddlin' with 'is takin's?

**IDRIS:** That's dishonest! Chap could get locked up for that!

**DEACON:** Got to catch 'im first!

**SKYLIGHT:** I'll have a talk with Root . . . see if he's all right.

**DEACON:** Bit old, in't he!

**SKYLIGHT:** Nothing wrong with Root. He'll pull his weight.

**DEACON:** 'S'not wot I mean! Bit old for knockin' abaht. Wot I mean is, 'e wouldn't pass a choosy foreman.

**SKYLIGHT:** We'll see that he passes. Sorry lot we'd be if we couldn't cover for an old man. (Exit **SKYLIGHT**.)

**DEACON:** You an' 'im regular mates?

**IDRIS:** We've been together now a long time. Open-cast coal in North Wales, oil refinery in Southampton . . . follow the money!

**DEACON:** He the cashier, or what?

**IDRIS:** Fifty-five! I never had a copper, I swear to you, Mr. Deason, before I met him. Lost it all gambling. A holy terror for the horses. Couldn't leave the dogs alone. Slow dogs and fast women . . . chap's got no chance!

**DEACON:** How much have you got now?

**IDRIS:** Oh, we've a pretty penny, I can tell you.

**DEACON:** Where?

**IDRIS:** Promise you won't spill, Mr. Deacon! You know what people are like

these days? A chap can't trust his own Mam. World is so full of dishonesty.

**DEACON:** Cross my 'eart, an' 'ope to die if I do. 'Idden in a good spot. I bet!

**IDRIS:** Right you are, Mr. Deacon . . . where nobody will get near it.

**DEACON:** Where?

**IDRIS:** Promise now you will keep it a secret.

**DEACON:** You can trust me — where is it?

**IDRIS (Looks carefully around):** Post Office! (**Deacon hides his chagrin**): Good spot, Mr. Deacon, isn't it? If somebody breaks into the post office and steal all the money, you still got your book, and you can draw your money out any time.

**DEACON:** But what good's it there? Whatcha goin' to do with it?

**IDRIS:** Big plans! Big plans! Be a millionaire one day. Old Blodwen Jones, that have the teashop in Carmarthen, read my cup one morning. "Idris Mortimer," she said, "you'll surprise them all. You'll be a millionaire the same as William Hill and be a credit to the Welsh race.

**DEACON (Suspiciously):** Wot's the plans?

**IDRIS:** Cross that little heart o' yours again, Mr. Deacon.

**DEACON:** Cross me 'eart!

**IDRIS:** Bookmaking! Skylight do pencilling and little Idris does shouting. Nothing big to start with, Mr. Deacon. National Hunt first — Towcester, Nuneaton, Kettering, maybe Stoke City. Strictly confidential, Mr. Deacon, strictly confidential! Place your bets please, my dears — honest Idris Mortimer, the other Welsh Wizard.

**DEACON:** I've got something lined up myself.

**IDRIS:** Good for you, Mr. Deacon! A secret, is it? Or maybe it could be told told in confidence to a friend?

**DEACON:** Well, she's about sixty, but she likes this kid 'ere. Give me a cigarette-lighter last Christmas. Fetched four quid in the pawn. Wants to marry me. Owns a block of 'ouses an' all!

**IDRIS:** Sixty is a bit old!

**DEACON:** Not if she's got the dough. I've often thought of marrying 'er. What's wrong with it?

**IDRIS:** Why not, Mr. Deacon! We can't escape forever, can we? Do you good to settle down. Do us all good, I say.

**DEACON:** That's the trouble! I got a couple already. Might be pushin' luck a bit too far.

(Enters **SKYLIGHT**.)

**SKYLIGHT:** Poor oul' blighter! Should be at home with his grandchildren. God, he was a fair man once of a day. Age took a lot from him, but you should see him fifteen years ago. A rolling man he was, with a glint in his eye and a shine on his face. He's a grandfather now!

**IDRIS:** Has he grandchildren, then?

**SKYLIGHT:** He's got a daughter married in Ireland, somewhere.

**DEACON (To SKYLIGHT):** Wonder if I was to ask you a small favour . . .

**SKYLIGHT (On guard):** Eh!

**DEACON:** Well, if I was to 'it you for five bob until pay day. I 'aven't a butt, so 'elp me! I'll pay you back soon as I draw me wage-packet.

**SKYLIGHT:** Oh, all right! You going to the canteen?

**DEACON:** Yes.

**SKYLIGHT (Hands him ten-shilling note):** You take your five shillings out of

that. You want a smoke, Idris?

IDRIS: Ten "Woods"!

SKYLIGHT: And I'll have ten "Woods." And bring back the change. I'm not a millionaire.

DEACON: You will be! That's for certain! You will be . . . both of you. That's if old Blodwen Jones in Carmarthen knows anything.

SKYLIGHT: Who the hell is Blowden Jones?

IDRIS (Nervously): Turning a bit daft, Deacon!

DEACON (Taking in cue): Blodwen Jones, eh! Convert, she was. 'Eard me speakin' once. Beware the 'orrible reward of sin. Beware the bark o' the elephant. Beware the 'orrible serpent roarin' like a savage lion in the jungles of Africky. As the Lord said it to me, I say it to you. 'E that 'ave no 'air on 'is 'ead is bald an' 'e wot 'ave no shoes on 'is feet is barefoot an' 'e that don't 'ave cigarettes dont 'ave no smoke. (Exit DEACON.)

SKYLIGHT: What have you been telling the Deacon?

IDRIS: Talking about racehorses.

SKYLIGHT: Oh, come off it! What did he mean by that crack about my being a millionaire?

IDRIS: There's sorry I am, Sky! I didn't think it would do no harm.

SKYLIGHT: Can't you see he's not to be trusted! He's harmless enough but he'd pick the eyes out of your head and you'd never know you were blind. He just couldn't help it, but he has to do it. It's second nature to him.

IDRIS: I'm sorry, Sky. You won't catch me opening this big mouth again.

SKYLIGHT: Forget it! But, remember, we've been planning this for a long time, Idris. If it works, we'll have better times . . . good times.

IDRIS: We'll make it work! How much have we got now?

SKYLIGHT: We have £300. Three hundred more and I reckon we've enough to start. If it gets out that we've got money stashed away, every chancer on the site'll get wind of it, and we'll be persecuted with sad stories.

(There is a knock at the door.) See who it is!

(IDRIS goes to door and opens it.)

IDRIS: Savoy Hotel, night porter . . . can I help you, sir?

(Enter a YOUTH of twenty. He carries two large suitcases which he lays down wearily.)

IDRIS: You should have told us you were coming, my dear. We'd have sent the station wagon.

SKYLIGHT: Cut it out, Idris!

(The newcomer wears a duffle-coat and a long University scarf. He wears horn-rimmed spectacles. He is CLEMENT O'SHAUGHNESSY, a University student from Ireland.)

CLEMENT: Hut forty-two?

IDRIS: 'ss right!

CLEMENT: Mind if I sit down? I'm fagged out!

SKYLIGHT: Go ahead!

(CLEMENT rests, gratefully, in a chair.)

CLEMENT: What a journey!

SKYLIGHT: How'd you come?

CLEMENT: Cork to Fishguard, then by train to here. I've been travelling for fifteen hours without a wink of sleep.

SKYLIGHT: This is Idris Mortimer. I'm Daniel Maginty. (Enter DEACON.)

Oh, and this is the Deacon!

(DEACON hands cigarettes to IDRIS and SKYLIGHT together with change.)

CLEMENT: I'm Clement O'Shaughnessy.

IDRIS: If you come by Fishguard, you must be from Cork!

CLEMENT: Yes . . . why?

IDRIS: We've got an old gentleman from there.

DEACON: You a chippie?

CLEMENT: Huh?

DEACON: Carpenter?

CLEMENT: God, no! I'm a student. To tell you the truth, I just want to make a few quid. A lot of students come over here for the summer, make enough money to last out the term when they get back. You know . . . cigarette money and a few drinks now and then.

IDRIS: Skylight here and I are students of the world.

CLEMENT: I'm afraid I don't know much about the world. Not yet, anyway.

IDRIS: What are you a student of, then?

CLEMENT: Medicine! — well, I'm only First Year, so I don't know much about it yet.

IDRIS: Just what we need — a doctor! We may have a case for you soon, boy.

Didn't bring an old bucket with you, by any chance?

CLEMENT: No! . . . should I?

SKYLIGHT: Cigarette?

CLEMENT: Thanks.

IDRIS: A cousin o' mine was a medical man, fifteen years at the University in Cardiff. Long time at school — very good doctor!

DEACON (To CLEMENT): You'd make a packet if you was to come to London with me. Set up in no time. Got the right connections.

SKYLIGHT: I'm sure you would, lose his license in a week.

DEACON: 'E wouldn't need no license where I'd take him. Anybody like a breather? Get's a bit stuffy in 'ere. Got to watch me voice — never know when I'll need it again.

SKYLIGHT: I'll go with you . . . like to have a talk with you!

DEACON: I can keep my mouth shut, if that's wot's worrin' you.

SKYLIGHT (To IDRIS): Big mouth!

(Exit DEACON and SKYLIGHT.)

CLEMENT: Strange kind of a crowd!

IDRIS: You'll get used to them.

CLEMENT: You're Welsh, aren't you?

IDRIS: 'ss right! Deacon — he's English. Skylight — Irish like yourself. Skylight and me is mates. Old Root's an Irishman. Nothing but Irishmen, eh! Take over the bloody country soon! Wherever there's money there's muck, and wherever there's muck, there's good old Paddy from Ireland, eh?

CLEMENT: What part of Wales do you come from?

IDRIS: South.

CLEMENT: But you left for the same reason as the Irish do?

IDRIS: What's that?

CLEMENT: Couldn't get work.

IDRIS: No bloody fear! You ask anybody in Carmarthen about Idris Mortimer. Bright lad! Got a good thing there, see! Worked in hardware. Eight quid a week — twelve quid fiddle. Proper thousand a year man I was!

**CLEMENT:** Why'd you leave?

**IDRIS:** There was this girl, see! Edwina Owen, very popular with the boys. Me, of course! I was the thousand a year man. I got out of there in quick time. No wedding bells for Idris Mortimer.

**CLEMENT:** But why did you leave?

**IDRIS:** Don't you see! It was Edwina. Nothing serious, really, but ever such a teeny-weeny bit pregnant.

**CLEMENT:** I see! . . . How did you meet Skylight?

**IDRIS:** Strange, that was! Never seen him before in my life. Edwina's brothers, three of 'em, second-row forwards on the Carmarthen team, come about me in a pub after the International against Ireland in Swansea. I was for it, I can tell you. Got the boot and down I goes. Next world very near! Then I heard a voice say "Fair play!" Fair play, mind you! And there was Skylight; another chap with him called Willie Canafaun, Irish chap, fairest fighter I ever seen.

**CLEMENT:** Is he here — Willie Canafaun?

**IDRIS:** No! Dead! Sad thing that was. Killed in a pub; bottle on the head. Chap made a song about him, too. When a man do his fightin' fair like that and beat all-comers, everybody want to see him beaten, see! Everybody want a kick when he's down. Couldn't beat him in a fair fight, see — hit him from behind. Never hit somebody from behind, boy, or kick a man when he's down. Not cricket, as they say in Oxford.

**SKYLIGHT (Entering, followed by DEACON):** The fate of all fair fighters and Irish buck-navvies. A bottle on the head or a boot in the breast. (Sings):

"Come all ye brave buck-navvies, now, and listen to my lay;  
All of young Willie Canafaun, who died Saint Patrick's Day.  
'Twas in the Crown at Cricklewood, his life he did lay down  
(IDRIS and DEACON join in at last line.)

Our darling Willie Canafaun, the pride of Camden Town.

They struck him down with bottles and they kicked him in the head;  
They kicked young Willie Canafaun, until that boy lay dead.  
So when the glass is lifted, lads, remember well to pray  
(All join in last line.)

For the soul of Willie Canafaun, who died Saint Patrick's Day.

So all ye gentle Irish lads, who cross the Irish Sea,  
Who leave your loving mothers, this direction take from me:  
Beware, my lads, of Cricklewood; from Camden stay away  
(All join in last line.)

For 'twas there that Willie Canafaun died on Saint Patrick's Day."

**CLEMENT:** Who killed Willie Canafaun?

(IDRIS looks fearfully at SKYLIGHT.)

**SKYLIGHT:** His own! His fellow-countrymen did it.

**IDRIS:** Back any horses, sonny?

**CLEMENT:** Oh, a few bob on the Derby or National.

**IDRIS:** If you like an easy quid, there's a thing going tomorrow called Severn Trumpeter. Could get two pounds on for you — hundred to nine. Fourth last time out at Fontwell . . . going hard. Going hard at present. Easy money.  
(There is a loud, imperious knocking at door.)

**IDRIS:** Come right in!

(Enter a small officious man, followed by a stout, imposing woman. The man carries a sheet of cardboard in his hand. The woman obviously, from the sort of uniform she wears, is a Matron of sorts. The man is **MR. ATKINSON**. The woman is **MISS BUTT**.)

**ATKINSON** (Pompous, incisive voice. Reads from cardboard): Agglesworth, Henry . . . I repeat, Agglesworth, Henry. (Exchanges sarcastic glances with **MISS BUTT**.) Is there an Agglesworth, Henry?

**DEACON** (Steps forward): Here!

**ATKINSON:** Are you sure?

**DEACON:** You can call me Deacon, if you like. (Winks at **MISS BUTT**.)

**ATKINSON:** I most certainly will not! (Reads from cardboard.) Agglesworth, Henry, foreman bricklayer. Report to General Foreman on site. 7:45 sharp, tomorrow morning. Maginty, Daniel, plumber.

**SKYLIGHT:** Here!

**ATKINSON:** Maginty, Daniel, plumber, report to General Foreman on site, 7:45 sharp tomorrow morning. Mortimer, Idris.

**IDRIS** (Proffers hand): Very well, thank you, and you are too, and (Indicating **MISS BUTT**.) your very charming daughter, if I may say.

**ATKINSON** (Ignoring proffered hand): Mortimer, Idris, plumber's mate, report report to General Foreman on site, 7:45 sharp tomorrow morning. O'Shaughnessy, Clement, student, labourer.

**CLEMENT:** Here!

**ATKINSON:** How do you do, Mr. O'Shaughnessy? (Shakes hands with him.) I trust you'll like it here. Report to Foreman, Tunnel gang, 7:45 sharp. Root, William Xavier Anthony . . . Root, William Xavier Anthony . . .

(There is another long-drawn-out cry from the dormitory. **MISS BUTT** jumps sharply behind **MR. ATKINSON**.)

**ATKINSON:** What in heaven's name was that? Is there a dog in here? Pets are not allowed in the huts. The Rules must be observed.

**IDRIS:** Choir practice for chapel on Sunday.

**ATKINSON:** Root, William Xavier Anthony, labourer. I repeat Root, William Xavier Anthony . . .

**DEACON:** 'E's changing 'is socks! Won't be long!

**ATKINSON:** He better not! Hogan, Darby, plasterer . . . Hogan, Darby, plasterer . . . I repeat, Hogan, Darby, plasterer.

**DEACON:** 'E 'asn't come yet.

**ATKINSON:** Oh, he hasn't, hasn't he? We shall see about this!

**DEACON:** Should be along any minute now.

(**DEACON** tenders woodbine packet to **MISS BUTT** which is rejected, but not entirely ignored.)

**IDRIS:** What did you say his name was?

**ATKINSON** (Reads impatiently): Hogan, Darby, plasterer.

**DEACON:** Know him?

**IDRIS:** We know him! I may tell you, Skylight won't like it!

(Enter **SKYLIGHT**, leading **ROOT**, wearing long nightshirt, by arm, from the dormitory.)

**ROOT** (Noticing **MISS BUTT**): God Almighty! There's women in here! Get my cap! . . . I'm naked!

(**SKYLIGHT** immediately fetches cap and **ROOT** advances.)

**ATKINSON:** Root. William Xavier Anthony ?

**ROOT:** Yes, sir ! Here, sir ! That's me, sir !

**ATKINSON:** Root, William Xavier Anthony, labourer, report to Foreman. Tunnel gang, 7:45 sharp tomorrow morning. Now, you may take over, **MISS BUTT :**

**MISS BUTT (Reciting grimly, shrilly):** Each of you will be required to take bath or shower after work. Failure to do so will result in immediate suspension.

**IDRIS:** Will you be havin' a bath with us, Nursie?

**DEACON:** Shame on you !

**ATKINSON:** You will please not make comment of any kind until Miss Butt has finished.

**MISS BUTT:** You will not keep pets such as cage-birds, bowl-fish or dogs. You will not consume food or partake of alcoholic beverages in the rest-rooms, or dormitory. You will not spit — I repeat, you will not spit indoors. Under no circumstances are the following articles to be used in the dormitory — commodes, chamber-pots, bed-pans, urinals or bedroom vessels of any kind. You will not smoke in bedroom. You will not entertain female visitors in rest-room or dormitory. Articles must not be thrown on floor. Lockers are provided for all your belongings. Breakfast at the General Canteen at 7 sharp in the mornings. Lunch at 2 noon. Supper at 6 p.m. Latecomers will not be served. Religious services will be conducted on site for all denominations, except Catholic. For Catholics, special 'buses will depart site at 9 and 1 on Sunday mornings for Catholic Cathedral. Buses will return at 10:15 and 12:15 respectively. For overtime workers a special 'bus will be provided to enable them to attend late Masses at the Cathedral. Any questions, or complaints ?

**ROOT:** What about confessions ?

**MISS BUTT:** I am sure the Administrator will accomodate Catholic workers on the site.

**IDRIS:** I'd like to make a complaint !

**DEACON:** Hear ! Hear !

**MISS BUTT:** Yes !

**IDRIS:** It's him! (Points at **ATKINSON**) He calls me Mortimer Idris, and my name is Idris Mortimer. Very confusing, putting our names backwards.

**MISS BUTT:** You will please extend your hands to be examined for sores, scars or cuts likely to incur infection.

(She examines hands swiftly and skillfully, but looks intently at old **ROOT**.)

**MISS BUTT:** Haven't I seen you somewhere before ? . . . Yes, I have ! Didn't you work at Siddington Aerodrome ? Yes, you did, and I know all about you !

(To **DEACON**): Used to have it wrapped up in newspapers !

**DEACON:** Don't believe it !

**MISS BUTT:** I saw it !

**DEACON:** Just goes to show, don't it ?

**MISS BUTT:** Show what ?

**DEACON:** You can't believe nothin' you see in the newspapers no more !

**MISS BUTT (To ROOT):** Well, I'm warning you ! Don't let me catch you, or out you go !

**ROOT:** Yes, Miss !

**ATKINSON:** Come along, Miss Butt !

(Exit **ATKINSON**. **DEACON** approaches **MISS BUTT**.)

**DEACON:** You from London ?



**MISS BUTT** (Reserved, but interested): No . . . Ipswich! Why do you ask?

**DEACON**: Knew you wasn't from London!

**MISS BUTT** (Held in spite of herself): Why?

**DEACON**: If I'd seen you once, I'd of never forgotten you!

**MISS BUTT**: Go on!

**DEACON**: You ain't married. I can see that!

**MISS BUTT**: Go on! How'd you know?

**DEACON**: Too young. Unspoiled. Untouchable. I could really fall for you.  
What about Satiddy night?

**MISS BUTT** (Flattered): Oh, you charmer! Trying to turn a poor girl's head.

**DEACON**: I'll see you at 7:30 then? You won't know me when I'm dolled up—proper toff!

**MISS BUTT**: I haven't said I'd go!

**DEACON**: If you don't, I'll drown myself . . . maybe I'll poison myself . . . I'll do it! I mean it! I've done it before, and I'll do it again.

**MISS BUTT**: I've got to wind my chores. 'Bye! (Exits **MISS BUTT**.)

**DEACON**: I'll do the winding up all right! (Rubbing his hands.) Don't she worry about that!

(Enter **SKYLIGHT**, **CLEMENT**, **IDRIS** and old **ROOT**, with trousers on.)

**IDRIS**: Doing a bit of sparking, Deacon?

**DEACON**: I'll bet she's got a tidy bit saved up, and I don't mean her bust!

**IDRIS**: Let's be having our bath, shall we?

(Exit **DEACON** and **IDRIS**.)

**SKYLIGHT** (To **ROOT**): Are you all right?

**ROOT**: I hope none of you lads gets bad kidneys. They're a bigger curse than carbuncles, and carbuncles is bad.

**CLEMENT**: The other man who didn't show up — Idris said you knew him.

**SKYLIGHT**: What's his name?

**CLEMENT**: Hogan . . . Darby Hogan.

**SKYLIGHT**: Trouble, that's what he is—real trouble! You'll see! Trouble follows him. If I'd known he was coming, I wouldn't be here.

(Enter **IDRIS** and **THE DEACON**.)

**IDRIS**: Better look to it, boys! The little chap with the roster's waiting on us.

**DEACON**: Like a bloody prison! Nothing but orders! No this; no that! Do as you're told now and don't piddle against the walls!

**IDRIS**: Liven it up, my boys! . . . Come on, then! (Stentoriously): Come on! We can't have this! No slacking then!

(**IDRIS** takes **SKYLIGHT**'s hand and sings as they dance.)

**IDRIS** (Singing):

“Chase me, Charlie! Chase me, Charlie!

Charlie's off to the wars!

Auntie Mary had a canary

Diddle dee, Diddle dee, daw!”

**IDRIS** (Leading the way): Come on, my dears! All together now!

**ALL** (Singing, exiting):

“Chase me, Charlie! Chase me, Charlie!

Charlie's off to the wars!

Auntie Mary had a canary

Up the leg of her drawers!”

**C U R T A I N**

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

Action takes place as before. The time is shortly before breakfast. THE DEACON is sitting on a chair near stove lacing his boots, when CLEMENT enters, dressed from Dormitory.

DEACON: 'Morning!

CLEMENT: Good-morning!

DEACON: Sleep all right?

CLEMENT: Not too bad, when you consider that I had to get up in the middle of the night to help old man Root.

DEACON: Well, so 'ad we all! Ever work with your 'ands before?

CLEMENT: Never! I'm a bit nervous. I haven't a clue. The only manual labour I ever did was help my mother with the dishes.

DEACON: It's easy! All you 'ave to do is to keep one eye on your work, and the other on the foreman. Go to the lav every hour and spend as long as you can there. If he says anything, tell him your bowels isn't working.

CLEMENT: What's it like, pay-night?

DEACON: You keep far away from the pitch-and-toss school.

CLEMENT: Oh! I don't mean that. Any bit o' sport?

DEACON: How d'you mean — booze or wimmin?

CLEMENT: Well, women, I suppose?

DEACON: And I bet I know the kind you mean! Can't wait to get started, eh? You naughty boy! Wot would your Mum say?

CLEMENT (With some embarrassment): Well — are they there or aren't they?

DEACON: Yes! All you have to do is get a 'bus into town but you better watch it or you'll be sorree. Wind up in the 'ospital, you will!

(The door opens and a man looks in. He is scruffy-headed and unkempt, of thirty or so. He has a wild, furtive look about him. He wears a leather jacket and Wellingtons with tops turned downwards. He is DARBY HOGAN.)

DARBY: Hut forty-two?

DEACON: This is it, mate!

CLEMENT: You must be Hogan — Darby Hogan!

DARBY (Cautious): What d'you know about me?

CLEMENT (Nervously): Why, nothing, just you belong to this hut. Your name was read out last night with the rest of ours. You report to General Foreman on site at quarter of eight. Breakfast at seven o'clock.

(DARBY enters the hut. He carries a bag, of the shopping variety. He looks furtively all around the room.)

DEACON: Better leave your luggage in the dormitory. It's in there.

(DARBY nods and enters dormitory.)

CLEMENT: Make you feel nervous, wouldn't he?

DEACON: He's a bad one!

CLEMENT: He's Irish, too, isn't he?

DEACON: And I thought you was all saints and scholars!

**CLEMENT:** That was long ago.

**DEACON:** Wot 'appened?

**CLEMENT:** We were invaded by the English about seven hundred years ago.

**DEACON:** Oh, you funny man!

(Enter **SKYLIGHT**, by main door, with an old, rusty tin and a bunch of twigs and battered greenery.)

**SKYLIGHT:** Look what I found! I put a bit of earth in it.

(**DEACON** rises and, assisted by **CLEMENT**, begins to arrange newspaper which was on table.)

**CLEMENT:** A piece of string?

**DEACON:** I've got an old bootlace here.

(They fashion the paper about the can.)

**SKYLIGHT:** Now for the finishing touches. (He delicately puts in greenery and twigs.)

**DEACON:** Beautiful! Beautiful! Artists — that we are! Artists! Should be put on exhibition — Modern Art! Bet you could ask ten thousand for it. See a lot worse!

**CLEMENT:** Well, at least it'll save us from getting out of bed.

(Enter **DARBY HOGAN** from dormitory. **SKYLIGHT** looks at him blankly, then with hostility.)

**DARBY** (Saluting): Skylight!

(**SKYLIGHT** does not answer but continues to look at **DARBY**.)

**DEACON:** Who's for breakfast?

**CLEMENT** (Nervously): Me . . . I . . . I'll go!

**DEACON:** You Irish really love each other, don't you?

(Exit **CLEMENT** and **DEACON**.)

**SKYLIGHT:** What are you doing here?

**DARBY:** You the General Foreman, or what?

**SKYLIGHT:** No, I'm not! But I'm warning you, Darby! There are four of us here now — four Irishmen. Don't let us down again!

**DARBY:** Listen to who's talkin'!

**SKYLIGHT:** I paid for what I did, and it's all over and done with, but we want none of your thieving here!

**DARBY:** Watch it, Skylight! No one calls me a thief!

**SKYLIGHT:** That's what you are, and maybe a murderer, too, for all I know!

**DARBY:** I wasn't there when Canafaun was killed. I swear that on my oath. I was in Leicester that night. He had it comin' anyway. He thought he was God Almighty! Thought he could lay down the law about everything.

**SKYLIGHT:** He was a fair fighter!

**DARBY:** They all had it in for him!

**SKYLIGHT:** How is it men have always found a way to crucify every decent man! If I find you were there that night, Hogan, I'll kill you.

**DARBY:** I told you I was in Leicester.

**SKYLIGHT:** Who's to say? But that's not all! If there's a penny lifted here, out you go!

**DARBY** (Advancing a step): Who're you threatening? You know I can take you anytime.

**SKYLIGHT:** No, you couldn't! You're yellow, Hogan, yellow to the hilt. I've half a mind to kick you out of here now.

(Suddenly a knife appears in **HOGAN'S** hand.)

**DARBY:** Come on, Skylight! Who's yellow now?

**SKYLIGHT:** With a knife in your hand!

**DARBY:** You come another inch, and you'll get it. Self-defense, Skylight!

(Enter IDRIS from dormitory, followed by old ROOT. The knife immediately disappears and DARBY exits quickly.)

**IDRIS:** Time we had breakfast, Skylight, boy! What was the matter with him?

**SKYLIGHT:** Nothing!

(ROOT sees the flowers in the can on the table.)

**ROOT:** What . . . what's this?

**SKYLIGHT:** That's for you!

(ROOT takes it and hugs it to his bosom.)

**ROOT:** The blessin's o' God on you for a gentleman. That you might have every hour's good luck an' that your kidneys might never give out on you like they did on me.

**SKYLIGHT:** You're welcome!

**ROOT:** I'll write to the wife and get her to say a special Novena for your intentions.

**SKYLIGHT:** Do that!

**ROOT:** I'll leave it here now on the table and Miss Butt 'll never guess what it is. (To SKYLIGHT): It might only be a small thing to you, but you made my day for me. You don't know what it's like, afraid to fall off asleep, not knowing the minute the call might come.

**IDRIS:** Why don't you get some pills?

**ROOT:** I tried all classes o' pills an' bottles an' powders but I might as well be drinkin' water. I went to four or five doctors and wound up goin' to specialists.

**SKYLIGHT:** What did they say?

**ROOT:** Ordered me to give up work and get rest. But how could I give up workin' with a wife an' a big family, an' I tryin' to give 'em a spatter of education so's they won't grow up thick and ignorant like their father . . . I'm better be goin', or I'll be docked. God! Isn't it a great thing to have England, though. Sure, only for that we'd have nothin'. I do be often tempted to tell 'em shut up back home, when they starts criticisin' England. They're all the time at it, sayin' 'tis rotten an' bad an' full o' temptation an' that 'tis no place for any respectable man to be.

**SKYLIGHT:** Somebody else must be blamed always, Root, when an Irishman won't conduct himself.

**IDRIS:** They're no worse than the Welsh, or the Scottish, or any of the others.

**SKYLIGHT:** Maybe, maybe not, but if that's the case, why do you see those notices in every second digs in London?

**IDRIS:** What notices?

**SKYLIGHT:** "No dogs. No Negroes. No Irish."

**ROOT:** But all the talk at home is dangerous. You have priests an' parsons an' politicians every hour o' the day blackguardin' the English, an' suppose the English gets wind of it all, what'll we do? Starve on the dole, an' be makin' laneways to the back doors of the County Councillors' houses, beggin' for a few days' work, with our hats in our hands. There's none o' that here, thank God . . . By God, when you walk up to an English foreman, he won't ask you who you gave your Number One to . . . they never heard of Fianna Fail or Fine Gael over here.

**IDRIS:** What the hell are those — Fine Gale and Fine Fawl?

**SKYLIGHT:** Ah, it's a game they have in Ireland. They cut each other to pieces in public, and they're all back-slapping and intermarried on the q.t.

**ROOT:** Imagine walkin' up to a foreman here an' sayin' you was good at the Gaelic! Japers, man! He'd tell you to have your head examined.

**IDRIS:** I speak the Welsh, but it wouldn't get you any job.

**ROOT:** We don't want much in Ireland but they won't even give us that little much. What do an old man like me want . . . a bit o' meat for his dinner, a fire an' a bed. That's not too much . . . but it's not a labourin' man's country back there. He has no power like they have here. He's no better than the ground he walks on in Ireland. They'll have to get jobs for the fathers o' families back there, or have they any notion of the way they're behavin' here? Can you blame a married man if he gets lonely on the Saturday night 'an goes prowlin' for company?

**IDRIS:** You should be in Hyde Park, boy!

**ROOT:** I'm a workman, not a preacher!

**IDRIS:** You and the Deacon would make a rare couple!

**SKYLIGHT:** How would you judge a man, Root? . . . a father, I mean?

**ROOT:** Hard to say! I suppose I'd judge him by what he does for his children . . . that's the only way.

**SKYLIGHT:** I don't think about Ireland often now. It doesn't do any good, but that's the way I judge Ireland, because a country is like a father, too. It should be judged by the provision it makes for its sons. If Ireland is to be judged like a parent, it must be convicted on every count.

**IDRIS:** Glad I wasn't born there! If a chap's parents or his country turn out like that, forget about 'em. You don't owe the country anything at all.

**SKYLIGHT:** Nothing, but I'd give all I have to go home again for good.

(All are ready to exit.)

**ROOT:** What wouldn't I give now to be back home, futtin' turf in Duhallow, or maybe poachin' trout on the Awnabweg. An' I wouldn't be over here today worryin' about my flowerpots an' my kidneys!

## C U R T A I N

## SCENE TWO

Action takes place as before. The time is the midnight of pay-night. On the set the lights are low. On the Radiogram a slow waltz is being played. A couple dance back and forth across the stage, cheek to cheek. They are THE DEACON and MISS BUTT.

MISS BUTT: Now, you stop that, d'you hear? I'm turning on the lights. (She switches on the lights, indignantly): I'm not that kind of girl!

DEACON: I couldn't 'elp it! You drive me crazy when I'm near you.

MISS BUTT: You sure there's nobody here?

DEACON: Positive!

MISS BUTT: What about all the Paddies?

DEACON: Pay-night! All boozin'! An' don't you go callin' 'em Paddies. Some don't like it. They got names, too, same as you an' me.

MISS BUTT: Well, I never! Fancy calling a Paddy by any other name?

DEACON: Well, they've got a right to it, same as anybody.

MISS BUTT: Well, you won't catch me calling a Paddy anything but Paddy — that's what they are, isn't it — Paddies?

DEACON: Never mind about them! Let's talk about us. We're young and it's summer-time.

MISS BUTT: The cheek! They'll be running for Parliament next!

DEACON: 'Ow about a kiss?

MISS BUTT: Oh, all right, but you better behave yourself!

DEACON (Rushes to her): I love you, you adorable creature! (Kisses her): Be my wife!

MISS BUTT: What?

DEACON: I mean it! It's the real thing, this time. I'm 'ead over 'eels in love with you. Marry me! Say you will! . . . we'll 'ave the 'oneymoon on the Riviera. I'll commit suicide if you turn me down.

MISS BUTT: You don't mean it?

DEACON (Cries): I don't mean it? (Kneels impulsively on floor: Takes her hand): My beautiful English Rose! My treasure! Be my own! Marry me! (Reverts to sanctimonious tones): Amen, Amen, I say to you! Beware of the man who speaks with a deceiving tongue. Beware of the impostor and the adulterer but cherish him who loveth you, adareth you, world without end, amen!

MISS BUTT: Oh, get off the floor!

(DEACON rises.)

DEACON: I'd die for you! I swear it! I'm insane with passion for you. You're like a drug in my veins, a fire in my 'ead, an ache in my 'eart.

MISS BUTT (Flushed): Hush! What's that?

(The sound of revelry is heard in distance.)

MISS BUTT: God! It's them Paddies! What shall I do?

DEACON: Marry me!

MISS BUTT: Oh, you shut up! I shouldn't have come here.

DEACON: Don't say that, my love. We can 'ide in one of the beds in the dormitory; pull the clothes up over our 'eads an' be nice an' comfy.

MISS BUTT: What d'you take me for?

(Voices off, singing, followed by a series of yells.)

**VOICES (Singing):**

"Far away in Connemara, far across the deep blue sea,  
Can you hear me poor oul' mother calling me?  
When you go to Connemara, a whitewashed cot you'll see  
An' me poor oul' mother waiting there for me."

**MISS BUTT:** Drunk, every one of 'em!

**DEACON:** They're not a bad lot!

**MISS BUTT:** Savages!

**VOICES (Offstage, singing to the air of "Napper Tandy"):**

"The Paddy breaks his back by day, and fills his gut by night  
The Paddy knows the good old pro's and the Paddy he can fight  
O, Camden Town; O, Camden Town, you stole my youth away  
For I was young and innocent, and you were old and grey."

(Enter **IDRIS**, backwards; holding on to a case of beer.)

"I took up with a widow, and she gave me beef and cheese,  
Until the Sergeant-Major, he came back from overseas . . ."

(**SKYLIGHT** holds other end of box and as he enters followed by **OLD ROOT**, he notices **MISS BUTT**. So does **IDRIS** and the song is halted. The box is lowered to the floor and looks are exchanged. **SKYLIGHT** consults the **DEACON** and much emphatic whispering is heard. All are dressed in their best clothes. **OLD ROOT'S** are of the old-fashioned variety.)

**SKYLIGHT (To MISS BUTT):** You'll hardly believe this, but when we were coming by the site just now, who should we see but a bunch of Irishmen with this box o' booze. We warned them — didn't we, Idris? We told them there wasn't any booze allowed in the Huts, so we took it away from them and told them where to get off! Some people never think of the Rules!

**IDRIS:** That is God's truth, upon my soul! I say to this big Irishman, "Paddy Joe," I say to him, "do you want to hurt the feelings of Miss Butt? There's naughty you are," I said to him. He started crying, he did; big tears all down the side of his kisser. "Don't tell our Miss Butt," he said; "I will never forgive myself if she finds me out!"

**MISS BUTT:** Do you expect me to believe that? I'm going straight to the Agent. Don't you Irish think of anything but breaking Rules? I should have known to expect trouble where there was Paddies!

(Exit **MISS BUTT**.)

**SKYLIGHT (To DEACON):** Well, what are you going to do about it? You're the whole bloody cause of it!

**DEACON:** Me? What can I do?

**SKYLIGHT:** Go after her and stop her! You want us all to get the poke? It was you who brought her here. You know what'll happen if she sees the Agent?

**ROOT:** O, God Almighty! An' I just settlin' down!

**IDRIS:** Propose to her!

**DEACON:** I already did.

**SKYLIGHT (Threat):** Well, here's what you'll do now! You'll tell her you'll buy an engagement ring next Saturday.

**IDRIS:** Of course — the ring!

**SKYLIGHT:** And move — or I'll crown you with one of these bottles.

(Exit DEACON hurriedly.)

SKYLIGHT: Let's get this beer on the table.

ROOT: My kidneys'll pay for it tonight!

SKYLIGHT: You're entitled to a few beers — sit down, man!

(ROOT sits and SKYLIGHT hands him an uncapped bottle, one to IDRIS and one for himself.)

SKYLIGHT: If you were at home now, Root, what would you be doing?

ROOT: Don't make me lonely, man! It's bad enough without thinkin' about it!

SKYLIGHT: Can't do any harm to think about it.

ROOT: Well, I suppose there would be a few of the older children up, an' the Missus would be polishin' their boots or ironin' shirts for Mass the followin' day. We'd say the Rosary then an' I'd ready the fire for the mornin' an' steal away into bed. Talk, then; talk away in whispers, myself an' the wife, for hours. That's the best of all, the talk between the two of us in bed, no troubles or worries until the mornin', no noise, only the dogs barkin' around the valley.

SKYLIGHT: What would you talk about?

ROOT: The children I suppose! How, maybe, one of 'em would be big enough next year to bring to England with me . . . (Pause) . . . to keep me company.

SKYLIGHT: What else?

ROOT: Oh, maybe we'd talk about borrowin' a bicycle from a neighbour an' cycle to town to see a T.D. or a County Councillor about gettin' a job. Waste o' time that, though. I'd be fobbed off with promises and told, maybe, I'd get a job on the roads, but sure you couldn't keep my family on a few pounds a week unless you wanted 'em to grow up thieves. A young fellow must have a shillin' in his pocket, the same as the next fellow, an' if he doesn't get it at home, he'll get it somewhere else. That's what turns young lads crooked — empty pockets an' no place to get a few bob.

SKYLIGHT: What else would you talk about?

ROOT: Oh, ordinary things! The price she paid for the meat for Sunday's dinner, or a piece o' material she bought for a frock for wan o' the young wans. She'd tell me, maybe, she was expectin' again an' we couldn't afford another child but she'd say that she'd manage somehow — that God was good, and there'd surely be an improvement in things soon, an' she'd cry then like always and ask me not to go back to England no more, that she do be lonely the long nights and she be heart-broken to see my chair empty . . . but the same as always, I have to go! That's a terrible day, that is — the day I have to go. I slip out in the mornin' early when they're all in bed. I never look behind. I looked around once ever, and I saw a child's face glued on to the window-pane, a small wan in her nightshirt an' her eyes full o' tears an' I swear to you 'twas the same as if my heart was torn out . . . I never looked behind me after that, only kept goin' with my head down . . .

(ROOT puts his head in his hands and begins to cry. SKYLIGHT goes to

ROOT and puts a hand on his shoulder. IDRIS blows his nose.)

SKYLIGHT: Hear there's a moor down the road, a few miles from the site!

IDRIS: Aye! Chockful o' rabbits an' hares!

SKYLIGHT: What about me an' you goin' down there after lunch tomorrow?

(ROOT raises his head.)

IDRIS: Aye! Pass away the evening. Have a pint o' beer, maybe, on the way back. Nobody on overtime yet an' there's nothin' to do on a Sunday afternoon.



**SKYLIGHT:** Steal a few dogs along the way and do a bit of huntin'. Might get a rabbit or a hare.

**ROOT:** Could I go with you?

**IDRIS:** 'Course you will, boy!

**SKYLIGHT:** Wouldn't think of going without you — would we, Idris?

**IDRIS:** 'Course not!

**SKYLIGHT:** Let's not waste this beer. (They quaff.) What would you be doin' in Carmarthen tonight, Idris?

**IDRIS:** Ah! There's fun I'd have tonight. Hop on my motor-bike with a bit o' tail, and scoot out the Cardigan road into the hill country. That is your man's country, boy, with real mountains! Get a puncture then, or maybe run out o' petrol. Start cursin' my hard luck. Plenty of petrol in the tank but the piece of tail don't know from Adam. Apologies to Blodwen or Ceinwen or whatever her name is. Sit down with her then on the side of the road and point out the stars with one hand. Go off on a little expedition of my own with the other. She says she'll tell her Mam when she gets home if Idris don't stop playing with her garters. Idris all humble apology! Start swearin' love, then tryin' to get her to climb across the ditch to hear the frogs croakin', Poor old bull frogs, only lookin' for the same thing as myself. Home then at sixty miles an hour, singin' at the top of our voices. Upon my soul, but those were the days, boy! Make you fed-up to think o' them!

**SKYLIGHT:** Why did I start askin' you two questions? This is like a bloody wake — here, drink another one o' these!

(CLEMENT enters, somewhat shamefacedly and unobtrusively, but is noticed immediately.)

**IDRIS:** Well, if it isn't the little doctor come in! You look as if you was out on a maternity case.

**SKYLIGHT:** Here! Have a bottle o' beer!

**CLEMENT:** Well, if you don't mind . . . I was thinkin' o' goin' straight to bed. I might get an early confession in the morning.

**SKYLIGHT:** Oh, come on! A bottle o' beer never sent anyone to hell! You can tell it in confession if your conscience is troublin' you.

(He thrusts a bottle of beer into CLEMENT'S hand.)

**ROOT:** Sit down, sonny, and rest yourself. I have young lads myself.

(CLEMENT sits down, dejectedly, and sips at his beer half-heartedly.)

**IDRIS:** Here! What's the matter with you? Lose all your money at the pitch-and-toss?

(CLEMENT shakes his head.)

**SKYLIGHT:** You go into town?

**CLEMENT:** Yes!

**IDRIS:** What's the matter? You wet your trousers, boy?

**SKYLIGHT:** Let him be, Idris!

**IDRIS:** What's the matter with him?

**ROOT:** What's up, sonny? We're all friends here.

**SKYLIGHT:** He went into town tonight with his chest out and the mating-call on his lips. Couldn't wait to get started!

**IDRIS (Understandingly):** Awh!

**SKYLIGHT:** You met a woman standing at a corner and she smiled at you and said: "Lonely, Paddy?"

**CLEMENT:** How did you know? . . . No! No! It wasn't that!

**SKYLIGHT (To ROOT):** The defendant was inexperienced, my Lord. It was his first offense and we throw ourselves at the mercy of the Court. The woman in the case was a professional. She lay in wait for the defendant who is of a trusting nature.

**IDRIS:** Saw him coming two miles away, I'll bet. "Here comes Irish Paddy with his blood runnin' high and his pockets full o' silver . . ." **(To CLEMENT):** Know it all now, don't you?

**CLEMENT:** No! No! I don't! I know nothing! I . . . I didn't say anything!

**SKYLIGHT (To CLEMENT):** Feel ashamed now, and dirty, like? Feel like you want to throw your guts up? You're sorry and you've been a fool and it wasn't worth it!

**CLEMENT:** Yes — that's how I feel — only worse!

**SKYLIGHT:** Well, stop mournin' like an old widow-woman! You're not the first man to make a fool of himself. It happened thousands of years ago to a chap called Adam, and it's been going on ever since.

**CLEMENT:** I feel terrible.

**SKYLIGHT (To CLEMENT):** Feel like washing your mouth out, don't you?  
**(CLEMENT nods.)**

**SKYLIGHT:** You're no different from any man. What made you think you were?

**CLEMENT:** O, my God! . . . No! No! . . . O, my God! . . . Oh, this is terrible! I should never have come to England . . . I didn't have to come . . . I'd have been as well off at home!

**ROOT:** This is what comes of having no Holy-water font in the house, an' no one ever thinkin' to say the Rosary! Sure, there isn't a holy picture or nothin' here.

**(CLEMENT rises suddenly and rushes towards dormitory, but SKYLIGHT holds on to him.)**

**SKYLIGHT:** Easy, easy! Easy on, boy! You'll find nothing in there. You can't run against the wind and let the rain wash it away. Over here nobody expects you to do otherwise. Sit down and finish your beer and we'll talk about home. Come on now, sit where you were, and if Idris throws up his gut, run for your life.

**(CLEMENT sits on his chair. IDRIS hands him a bottle of beer.)**

**IDRIS:** Drink enough beer, boy, and your sins will be drowned in it. Sins is the very same as fleas . . . can't stand the sight of beer!

**SKYLIGHT:** Wonder how the Deacon is getting on with Miss Butt?

**IDRIS:** Daresay he have her converted by now.

**SKYLIGHT (To CLEMENT):** Suppose you were at home now, what would you be doing? I mean about this time of night and on this particular night?

**CLEMENT:** Saturday night! . . . Oh, I suppose I'd be just about coming back from a dance somewhere. I'd let myself in the back with a latchkey and turn on the light in the scullery. Some Saturday nights if I was hungry I'd put a fry on — rashers, eggs and so on. The table would be laid by my mother. I'd have a feed then and read the evening papers, drink a glass of milk and tiptoe upstairs to bed.

**SKYLIGHT:** So's your mother wouldn't hear you?

**CLEMENT:** Well, yes! But she always hears me. I'd ask if she was awake and go in to her room if she was, and she'd turn on the light and I'd sit on the side of the bed.

**ROOT:** Your father is dead, so, is he?

**CLEMENT:** No! . . . he's at sea. We'd have a cigarette then, my mother and I, and we'd talk. She'd ask me all about the dance and I'd tell her, or if I saw some girl home she'd want to know all about her. We'd talk and laugh for an hour or so. If she heard any funny stories during the day she'd tell me and if I had heard any I'd tell her. We might discuss a book she was reading, or she might want me to take her to a play or a picture on Sunday night. I'd probably go to bed, then, and read a novel until I fell asleep.

**IDRIS:** Not like over here, eh?

**CLEMENT:** O, my God! No! . . . no comparison. I don't know what it is but this place is like a dream — it's worse, it's a nightmare!

**SKYLIGHT:** You don't like England?

**CLEMENT:** I hate it! It's not a country, it's a machine! There's no time for friendship. It's all right, I suppose, for certain types.

**SKYLIGHT:** Like old Root here, and Darby Hogan, and Idris and myself. It's all right for us because we're coarse and rough and we don't hurt so easily and the edges were knocked off us years ago, and anyway we don't count—we're not important!

**CLEMENT:** I didn't mean that, and you know I didn't!

**SKYLIGHT:** For you, this is just an experience. You'll tell the dirty parts to your pals when you get home.

**IDRIS:** And tell the nice parts to his Mam!

**CLEMENT:** Well, that's true, I suppose! You don't tell your mother everything. A lot of things she wouldn't understand. No need to hurt her needlessly with things she doesn't want to believe, anyway.

**SKYLIGHT:** A fat lot of good you're going to do us when you get back!

**CLEMENT:** What should I do? I don't get it!

**SKYLIGHT:** You're the educated type. We're depending on you to tell them back there that we want to come home — old Root and the rest of us — an' tell 'em they'd better do something about it quick, because we're gettin' sick of it.

**IDRIS:** The Empire is collapsing, lad.

**SKYLIGHT:** It isn't every generation sees the collapse of an Empire.

(Enter **DEACON**, mopping his brow.)

**DEACON:** Give me a bottle o' that!

(**SKYLIGHT** hands him a bottle.)

**DEACON:** I never thought she'd take me up on it, but she did.

**IDRIS:** Hard lines, Deacon, boy — but all for a worthy cause, you might say.

**DEACON:** It's not too bad. She's got six hundred nicker in the bank — wants to spend the 'oneymoon in the Isle of Wight!

**IDRIS:** What's wrong with that?

**DEACON:** Everything! I've 'ad two 'oneymoons in the Isle of Wight. I'm bound to be reckernized there! Life of every party I was! Should 'ave kept my bleedin' big mouth shut! (**Swallows bottle at once**): Gimme another! I deserve it!

(**ROOT** exits.)

**DEACON:** If I ever get in the chips, I'll buy him a lay, just for 'isself . . . I bet 'e'd like that!

**IDRIS:** When is the date of the wedding, Deacon, boy?

**DEACON:** Sooner 'n you think! She wants to elope. Suits me fine, as long as

she brings the £600.

**IDRIS:** What will you do with the money?

**DEACON:** Sports car!

**IDRIS:** What about the Missus, then?

**DEACON:** She'll get 'er money's worth!

**IDRIS:** A fortnight for six hundred! You'll want to put in a lot of overtime for that, boy!

**DEACON:** I 'ave no complaints from other customers. When I 'ave my car, I'll get my old Deacon's suit out again and try the Midlands this time. (Assumes sanctimonious role again): Ye shall be glorified, for as the sun rises the Lord shall come among ye and they that 'ave given away all things shall be multiplied and their children's children shall gather the 'arvest. (High pitched): But beware the miser who 'oardeth 'is belongings, for the Lord shall come among them and 'is kick shall be the kick of a mule, and 'is bark shall be the bark of the elephant and the jackal shall whiten his bones and 'is body shall be scabdecated — that's a new word, that is — and the locusts will swarm on 'is vineyards (Reverts to subdued tone): Thank you, madam . . . £5, is it? . . . here is your receipt.

(Enter **ROOT** followed by **DARBY HOGAN** dressed as usual.)

**ROOT:** Will you chance a bottle o' beer, Mr. Hogan?

(He hands bottle to **DARBY** who accepts it sullenly.)

**ROOT:** What would you be doin' now, if you were at home, Mr. Hogan?

(**DARBY** quaffs bottle hungrily.)

**ROOT** (Politely): I suppose you'd be out romancin' with your girl somewhere, or you're a sensible man, maybe, that'd be in his bed with his prayers said an' he turnin' in to sleep?

**DARBY:** Why don't you mind your own shaggin' business, you meddlin' oul' piss-a-bed?

**SKYLIGHT:** All he asked was a civil question! He gave you a bottle o' beer. No need to bark at him.

**DARBY:** Well, it was a bloody fool's question!

**SKYLIGHT:** Well, give him a fool's answer!

**DARBY:** All right! I'll tell you what I'd be doin'. I'd be in the dirty loft o' some farmer's house, an' I'd be hungry, 'cos there's no bloody farmer in Ireland goin' to give you enough to eat, an' I wouldn't have a ha'penny in the pants hangin' from the bed, 'cos my wages are gone on fags, an' I'd be sick to the gills with farmers who think that anyone who works for them should be treated like cattle. I'd be sick of sittin' at a separate table while I was havin' my dinner, watchin' the farmer an' his wife an' family eatin' the best o' meat, an' me tryin' to guzzle the belly of a sow, an' they givin' me side-looks all the time like I was a savage. I'd be thinkin' I'd jump out o' bed an' break into the room where the farmer was sleepin' with his wife. I'd be thinkin' that maybe I'd catch the farmer by the hair o' the head inside in his bed an' cut his gad, an' gattle his missus for spite.

**SKYLIGHT:** That's enough o' that!

**DARBY:** I didn't start it! He did!

**DEACON:** It's the pitch-and-toss! I bet he lost it all tonight!

**DARBY** (Threat): What's it to you?

**DEACON:** Chap won £400 quid tonight; went off to town to blow up!

**IDRIS:** Foolishness, that is, carrying so much money!

**DEACON:** Could be knocked off on the way home. Chap drunk like that wouldn't 'ave a chance. Wouldn't 'ave a clue! Gimme another bottle o' beer!  
(IDRIS hands him a bottle of beer.)

**DEACON:** Should be drinkin' champagne, on account o' my engagement! Well—  
'ere's to marriage . . .

(DARBY HOGAN sidles out, unnoticed by all, except SKYLIGHT, who looks thoughtfully towards exit.)

**IDRIS:** Very strange party of Irishmen, indeed . . . no singing and no cursing and no fighting. What's the matter with poor old Mother Ireland tonight? What about the Doctor . . . a little song, eh! . . . no need to be shy among friends.

**ROOT:** Begor, yes, a song from a Corkman, before I go to the lavatory.

**CLEMENT:** I don't know any songs. I haven't much of a voice. I'd join in, though. That's all I could do.

**IDRIS:** Well, if you don't mind, there's a song the Cork Paddies used to sing after the Internationals in Cardiff. Skylight knows it! Come on, Skylight!

**SKYLIGHT (Singing):**

"Oh! the night the goat broke loose on the Parade,  
Young Mary Anne Fitzgibbon got afraid;  
She went tearin' down the Coal Quay . . .

**ALL:**

Sure, 'twas worse than any polka,  
'Twas the night the goat broke loose on the Parade.

**SKYLIGHT:**

Oh! the night the goat broke loose on the Parade  
All the people in Cork City got afraid;  
And Mary Anne Fitzgibbons

**ALL:**

Got her knickers torn to ribbons  
'Twas the night the goat broke loose on the Parade."

## C U R T A I N

## ACT THREE

### SCENE ONE

Action takes place in Recreation Room. The time is the Sunday night of a few weeks later.

DARBY HOGAN stands, alone, listening at doorway. He looks now and then to Radiogram, and then, quickly, with great show of strain and strength, lifts part of the Radiogram from the floor. He extracts a bundle of notes from under same, takes a few, and returns the remainder. He pockets the notes and is about to exit when DEACON enters. They weigh each other off carefully for a moment.

DEACON: What are you doin' 'ere?

DARBY: A man asked me in London one night why I was wearin' a green tie. Know what I did?

DEACON: Made 'im swallow it!

DARBY: Something like that, but at the other end!

DEACON: I was just askin'!

DARBY: Ask another an' I'll fracture your forehead, Limey!

DEACON: I don't mean to be inquisitive, but you look as if you'd 'ad a fright.

DARBY: I'm entitled to be here. I've got the same right as you to be here.

You know what I'd do in a minute, Limey? Take you to some out-o'-the-way gullet on the site an' hide you there! The likes o' you did it in Ireland for years an' no one knew it. No one cared.

DEACON: They 'aven't got anyone yet for the robbery!

DARBY: What robbery?

DEACON: Oh, come off it! You know what robbery . . . chap's still in 'ospital.

It don't look like 'e'll recover. Even if 'e does, 'e won't be the same. Fair kicked to death, 'e was!

DARBY: Well, that's nothin' to me! Why should I care? I know nothin' about it. I can't help it.

DEACON: But 'e was a Paddy an' you're a Paddy an' the pore bugger's gaspin'!

DARBY: Can I help it?

DEACON (Craftily): Nobody said you could, Paddy; nobody said you could . . .

'Ere, 'ave a cig, Paddy. (DARBY accepts.) You know, you're right, Paddy.

Served the bloke right for cartin' all that lolly around with 'im . . . I wouldn't 'alf 'ave minded knockin' 'im off myself. Couldn't trust nobody, though. Chaps around here do too much talkin.' Good job it was a Paddy, though. Police don't bother much when it's a Paddy cops it. Always knockin' each other's blocks off, Paddies. Police question you yet?

DARBY: For an hour! . . . I didn't tell 'em a thing . . . I didn't know nothing. God, man, why do people be always houndin' me?

DEACON: Of course you don't know nothin', an' if I was in your boots, I wouldn't 'ave said a word either. Nosey lot of buggers anyhow.

DARBY (On guard): It's nothin' to me. Why should I worry? (Exiting): I've worries enough of my own, so I have! (Exit DARBY.)

DEACON: So you 'ave, Paddy . . . so you 'ave!

(DEACON begins to look around the room and beats a tattoo on his chin as he considers a likely hiding place for the money which was stolen. Enter SKYLIGHT and IDRIS.)

SKYLIGHT: What are you lookin' so mysterious about?

IDRIS: I'll tell you, boy! He's composing a love-song to Miss Butt. Lovely bit, that!

SKYLIGHT: Whatever it is, he's taking it seriously.

DEACON: I'm a serious chap!

(IDRIS takes off his coat and sits on a chair. DEACON exits thoughtfully into dormitory.)

IDRIS: He's in a very thoughtful mood tonight!

SKYLIGHT: I don't fancy him like that. He isn't up to any good.

IDRIS: It could be a very expensive bit of thinking for somebody . . . he can't do nothing to us . . . can't break the Post Office. How long more do you suppose, Skylight, before we start?

SKYLIGHT: Three to four months, I reckon . . . but better make no definite plans . . . you remember the other times?

IDRIS: Remember the greyhound we brought from Ireland . . . two hundred quid.

SKYLIGHT: Well, that was hard luck . . . he just wouldn't get off at the start, that was all.

IDRIS: Right you are! He wouldn't get off in Hyde Park, boy! . . . there's surprised I was that night in White City.

SKYLIGHT: Well, you never know with greyhounds.

IDRIS: I wouldn't have minded so much, but you should have seen the fine bucket of potatoes I give him half hour before the race.

SKYLIGHT: What? . . . You empty-headed puss-brained apology for a Welsh-man . . . you what?

IDRIS: Well, he was hungry, and he wouldn't run very fast, would he, on an empty belly? You should have seen him devouring those potatoes . . . do your heart good, it would.

SKYLIGHT (Despair): God! O, God Almighty! . . . Don't you know you're not supposed to feed a dog before he runs? Of all the thick, stupid jack-asses in Wales, why did they have to foist you over on me?

IDRIS: There's sorry I am, Sky!

SKYLIGHT: "There's sorry you are!" Can't you think of anything else to say?

IDRIS: Sorry, Sky!

(Enter CLEMENT.)

CLEMENT: Am I glad to be getting out of this!

SKYLIGHT: Where's old Root?

CLEMENT: I left him in the pub.

SKYLIGHT: Well, you shouldn't have!

CLEMENT: Why not?

SKYLIGHT: Suppose he gets drunk and misses the bus?

CLEMENT: I wanted him to come back here but he wouldn't. He told me he wanted to be alone.

SKYLIGHT: He's too old to be knockin' around on his own. It's three miles into town. If he doesn't come back on the last bus, you go lookin' for him. Why wouldn't he come?

CLEMENT: He was depressed, especially with me leaving for Ireland tomorrow . . . he said he'd give his soul to be able to come with me. D'you know

what he said? He said: "Look, boy; I'd give my soul away for a look at my family this minute."

**SKYLIGHT:** That's tough!

**CLEMENT:** He was heartbroken . . . he even cried when he started to talk about his family . . . said he was a proud man and not a . . .

**SKYLIGHT:** Not a what?

**CLEMENT:** Not an arse-lickin' yes-man or a servant.

**SKYLIGHT:** You bent on going?

**CLEMENT:** Yes!

**SKYLIGHT:** He'll miss you, being a Corkman, an' all, the same as himself.

**CLEMENT:** I couldn't stay here any longer.

**SKYLIGHT:** When are you leaving?

**CLEMENT:** Six o'clock tomorrow evening. I get a 'bus into town, a train to Manchester, a flight from there to Cork direct. All going well, I should be in Cork tomorrow night at ten o'clock.

**SKYLIGHT:** I hope you realize how lucky you are?

**CLEMENT:** I do!

**IDRIS:** Why are you leaving? Work too hard?

**CLEMENT:** Well, it was only a holiday for me in the first place . . . a break from the studies . . . the work is all right . . . but it's such a waste of time. Look at the years it took from old Root and the years it's taking from you, and what will you have to show? They don't train you to do anything. They just buy your strength and your years.

**IDRIS:** But it's work, and a man must work!

**CLEMENT:** I don't know. They're just buying a man's strength and health. How come it's always the Irish you find doing the dirty work?

**IDRIS:** This man has been drinking the wrong kind of beer, Skylight!

**CLEMENT:** What good is a big wage-packet to an Irishman in England? Can he buy a look at home?

**SKYLIGHT:** That's old Root's talk!

**CLEMENT:** Can he buy the company of the ones he loves? He can't buy home or the things of home and what good is all the money in the world to a man when he can't buy what he wants?

**SKYLIGHT:** Old Root got some of the things he wanted!

**CLEMENT:** Old Root would give his wage-packet now for one hour with his wife and children, and what good is my wage-packet when I haven't a minute's happiness here. Could I buy a conversation with my mother, now? Could I? Wage packets! . . . what the hell good are they? Anything an Irishman buys over here — booze or women or entertainment — he's only buying to make him forget about home.

(Enter DEACON.)

**DEACON:** I'll 'ave your wage-packet, Paddy, if you feel like givin' it away!

**IDRIS:** Didn't your old Mammy ever tell you, Deacon, that eavesdroppin's a nasty habit?

**DEACON:** I wasn't listenin'! The words just came my way. You Paddies — all you ever think of is Ireland. You'd swear there wasn't no place in the world like it. Wot would you do if it wasn't for the English? Why, you'd starve to death!

**SKYLIGHT:** When England sneezes, Ireland gets pneumonia. When England farts, Ireland gets the runs . . . that's it, Deacon, isn't it?



**DEACON:** You're bloodywell right, it is!

**SKYLIGHT:** Go on, Deacon . . . tell 'em!

**DEACON:** You know, we've actually got pubs in London and, would you believe it, no soldier wearin' an English uniform dare go in . . . 'e wouldn't come out alive if 'e did. You want to see the Paddies on a Satiddy night in London, kickin' each other's heads in an' assaultin' policemen. You go to Liverpool or Manchester an' you look at the way they live. You got six kids in a room, boys an' girls all mixed up together. When a chap can't get work back in Ireland we fetch 'im 'ere an' give 'im a job but 'e don't say thanks. Come 'is first pay-night, 'e smashes a pub up, or bashes a constable who never said a bleedin' word to 'im. Know what I've seen 'em do at the flicks — soon as the Queen appears on the screen for the National Anthem, the Paddy shouts "Up the Republic" an' dashes 'is seat down. I'm not sayin' they're all like that! Now you chaps is all right, but I wouldn't feel safe on a job where there was Paddies less 'n I was sure they 'ad a riot squad 'andy.

**SKYLIGHT:** And there you are, gentlemen; that closes the case for the Crown.

**DEACON:** Know what gives me a proper laugh?

**SKYLIGHT:** Tell us!

**DEACON:** Well, you know them Paddies as talks the same as toffs. I seen 'em havin' a high ol' time in the clubs in London, really puttin' it on. It's not so bad bein' a Paddy, but when a Paddy tries to come the nob, that's the limit, that is!

(Enter **DARBY HOGAN**, who is about to pass into the dormitory.)

**SKYLIGHT:** Have you seen old man Root?

**DARBY:** No, I haven't!

**SKYLIGHT:** Well, he hasn't come in yet. I just thought you might have seen him, an' there's no need to shout at me just because you've go the wind up!

**DARBY:** Well, I haven't seen him, an' I don't give a rattlin' damn if he never showed up . . . keepin' us awake all night with his leakin' kidneys!

**SKYLIGHT:** Pass on, Christian!

**DARBY:** An' what d'you mean about my havin' the wind up?

**SKYLIGHT:** You know what I mean!

**DARBY:** I'm not a mind reader. Suppose you tell me?

**SKYLIGHT:** Well, I'd say you have the wind up because you're the only man in Hut 42 who hasn't got an alibi for the night of the robbery, but I don't blame you for being worried because if I was in your boots I'd be worried too.

**IDRIS:** An' don't go giving us any nasty looks or Skylight an' me'll clobber hell out o' you, an' your own Mam won't know you boy when we've done with you . . . that right, Sky?

**SKYLIGHT:** I'm not goin' to start anything, but if I do you can be sure I'll finish it damn quick.

**DEACON:** You chaps stop pickin' on him! It isn't fair!

**DARBY:** Keep out, Mr. Gramophone! I work alone an' I fight alone!

**SKYLIGHT:** Alone, the way you an' your huntin' pack mobbed Willie Canafaun, maybe!

**DARBY:** I'm not goin' to tell you any more that I wasn't there that night!

**SKYLIGHT:** Better find an alibi for that, too, while you're at it.

**DEACON:** I seen 'im on the site that night, about the time of the robbery, so it couldn't 'ave been 'im!

**SKYLIGHT:** You were here all the time after we left, so you couldn't have seen him.

**IDRIS:** You went to the toilet, the same as any of us.

**DEACON:** Well, I went for a breath of air, too, see, an' I took a turn around the site to get the fag-smoke out o' my lungs, an' I seen 'im!

**SKYLIGHT:** What was he doin'? Sayin' the Rosary?

**DEACON (Encouraged):** That's it! 'E was sayin' the Rosary!

**SKYLIGHT:** On a large piece of green tarpaulin?

**DEACON:** That's right! On a large piece o' green tarpaulin. I swear it.  
(The others laugh.)

**DARBY:** Laugh to hell if ye want to! I'm goin' to bed an' if oul' rotten-kidneys wakes me up tonight, I'll belt him one.  
(Exit DARBY to dormitory.)

**IDRIS To DEACON:** What a shockin' liar you are!

**DEACON:** Why, 'ow dare you! I never told a lie in my life!

**SKYLIGHT:** That's right! Don't you know that if an Englishman tells a lie, the world stops going around for two whole minutes!  
(At this stage there is a knock at the door.)

**CLEMENT:** Maybe that's old Root now?

**SKYLIGHT:** No . . . he wouldn't knock . . . see who it is, Idris!  
(IDRIS goes to Door and opens it.)

**IDRIS:** Come on in!  
(Enter ATKINSON, followed by MISS BUTT in uniform.)

**IDRIS:** Well, if it isn't Mr. Atkinson, that calls our names the other way around! Most welcome, I'm sure!

**SKYLIGHT:** To what do we owe this delightful honour? Come right in and make yourselves at home. Idris, put the kettle on!

(ATKINSON and MISS BUTT stand together, somewhat aloof and hesitant.)

**IDRIS:** Very strange behaviour from Atkinson, Mister! Used to be the life of every party.

**ATKINSON:** You'll forgive me if I don't sound cheerful. My duty is not pleasant!

**SKYLIGHT:** Well, come to the point! . . . if it's about somebody making improper use of a flowerpot, there isn't a word of truth in it.

**ATKINSON:** We need some of you to do a spot of identification.

**SKYLIGHT:** Is it about the robbery?

**ATKINSON:** No! Something more serious, I'm sorry to say! There's been an accident.

**SKYLIGHT:** Yes, but what's that got to do with us?

**ATKINSON:** I'm sorry to have to tell you.

**SKYLIGHT (Alarmed):** It's old Root, isn't it?

**ATKINSON:** Root, William Xavier Anthony.

**SKYLIGHT (Excitedly):** Well, come on! Where is he? Did you get a doctor?

Come on, goddamn you, take us to him!

**ATKINSON:** There's no point now in getting excited . . . he's dead!

**CLEMENT:** Dead!

**SKYLIGHT:** You sure?

**ATKINSON:** Yes! He had a doctor and Miss Butt was there.

**IDRIS:** Oh Gawd! . . . his wife and little ones!

**SKYLIGHT:** When? . . . How? . . . Where did it happen?

**ATKINSON:** Well, it was a motor-cyclist. The old man crossed the road and

walked straight in the path of the bike. Driver didn't hang around.

**SKYLIGHT:** Where did it happen?

**ATKINSON:** In town . . . just outside the public conveniences . . . you know where they are . . . you pass them on the way in from the site. Traffic's pretty lively there.

**CLEMENT:** But how d'you know it's oul' Root? How can you be sure if there wasn't identification?

**ATKINSON:** I'm afraid there's no question about it! There was a letter in his pocket addressed to "William Root." It was from his wife. Had a snapshot of some kids in it. We'll need two of you for formal identification.

**SKYLIGHT:** Have you told his wife yet?

**ATKINSON:** That will be taken care of as soon as the identification is over. The Company will look after that. Company takes care of everything like that.

**SKYLIGHT:** Will the Company take care of oul' Root's widow?

**ATKINSON:** Oh, you can't expect the Company to do that! The accident didn't happen on the site. The Company is, therefore, free of all responsibility. There will be a collection, of course, from his workmates. There usually is, whenever there's an accident.

**SKYLIGHT:** Did he have a priest?

**ATKINSON:** A priest!

**SKYLIGHT:** He was a Catholic. A priest must be notified!

**ATKINSON:** No! . . . there wasn't a priest!

**SKYLIGHT:** Bloody heartless bunch o' pagan gets! Why didn't you get a priest? You should have got a priest immediately!

**ATKINSON:** Well, you can't blame the Company, Paddy, and how could anybody know he was a Catholic when he was dead? Just wouldn't be possible, Paddy, would it?

**SKYLIGHT:** Where's the body?

**ATKINSON:** In town . . . they're sending out a police car . . . there isn't much time. It's on its way now.

**SKYLIGHT:** I'll go! . . . who else?

**CLEMENT:** I'll go, too!

**SKYLIGHT (To IDRIS):** Contact the boys and tell them. Get them to form some kind of committee to make a collection for his widow and to see about funeral arrangements.

**IDRIS:** Sure! Sure! I'll do that! What else?

**SKYLIGHT:** Maybe she'll want the body flown home. I don't know but get them together. They'll do what they can. They'll all help in this.

**IDRIS:** I'll go now, right away. See you when you come back.

*(Exit IDRIS. SKYLIGHT goes to dormitory door.)*

**SKYLIGHT:** Hogan! Hogan, come out here! Oul' Root's dead! *(To ATKINSON):* Just a minute and we'll be with you. *(To dormitory):* Come on out here, Darby!

*(Enter DARBY, suspiciously looking from one to the other.)*

**DARBY:** What is it? What d'you want? What's that about oul' Root? What's he after doin' now?

**SKYLIGHT:** He's dead! He was knocked over by a motorbike.

**DARBY (Amazement):** What's that to me? What are you shoutin' at me for? D'you think I killed him, too? Why can't you leave me alone? He's dead, isn't he? D'you want me to bring him back to life?

**SKYLIGHT:** I want you to come with us. You're an Irishman!

**DARBY:** Oh, I'm sworn in again, am I? I'm an Irishman again! God, that's good, that is!

**SKYLIGHT:** All I want you to do is to meet a priest when we get into town.

**DARBY:** What for?

**SKYLIGHT:** You're a Catholic, damn you! You knew oul' Root. He was always nice to you.

**DARBY:** Expect me to walk into town for nothing?

**SKYLIGHT:** You won't have to walk.

**CLEMENT:** There's a police car coming for us. Come on, you're the only other Irishman here.

**DARBY:** I'm ridin' in no police car . . . you're not goin' to pull any fast ones on me.

**CLEMENT:** Nobody is pulling a fast one. Root is dead. He was your roommate. Don't let us down opposite strangers, man. No wonder they laugh at us when you behave the way you do.

**DARBY:** Well, I'll give 'em a good laugh . . . you just wait there . . .

(DARBY exits and after a moment returns with the newspaper-covered gallon and its flowers. He bangs it on the table.)

**DARBY:** Here! Put this on his grave, and don't ever say that I didn't honour my fellow Irishman and pay my debts to the country that I love.

(DARBY exits to dormitory. SKYLIGHT would follow him but is prevented by ATKINSON, DEACON and CLEMENT.)

**ATKINSON:** He's potty, Paddy! A nut case, that! See it in his eyes!

**DEACON:** I'll go along and meet your priest . . . if you want . . .

**SKYLIGHT:** All right . . . thanks!

**MISS BUTT:** The police will be waiting. We'd better go.

(DEACON immediately goes to escort her from Hut. Exit DEACON and MISS BUTT.)

**ATKINSON:** No need to fuss yourself, Paddy. He was an old chap. I've seen Paddies die before in accidents . . . few Irishmen, maybe, take a day off to get drunk, and then back to work, again.

**SKYLIGHT:** It's nothing to you, is it? That his soul went from him outside a lavatory in a mad street in a strange country. He'll dream no more of goin' back, or be puttin' a few shillin's aside for his holiday at Christmas. Poor dead old man, he'll walk the wet lanes around his cottage no more. He'll frighten the hares no more in the high fields of home, or stand and look at the waters in the inches of the low country. He'll never lie with his wife again, and many a night she'll twist and turn with misery in her bed for him that'll come home no more. To you, he's another Paddy won't be here to sign the time-sheet in the morning, but God Almighty Christ, I tell you this man was a King in his own country.

## CURTAIN

## SCENE TWO

Action takes place as before. The time is a day later. It is 5 o'clock in the afternoon. IDRIS is seated on a chair reading a newspaper. SKYLIGHT is seated, and occupied with the darning of a sock. He stops for a moment, and sings.)

**SKYLIGHT (Singing):**

"Come all ye sons of Irishmen and listen to my song;  
I am a bold buck-navvy and I don't know right from wrong;  
Of late I was transported, boys, from Erin's holy shore;  
My case is sad, my crime was bad, for I was born poor.  
And if you're born poor, my boys, that is a woeful state;  
The Judge will sit upon your crime, and this is what he'll state:  
'The Prisoner he is guilty, and the law I must lay down;  
Let this man be transported straight away to Camden Town'!"

**IDRIS:** Aye! It's the worst crime of all!

**SKYLIGHT:** Men have got over it.

**IDRIS:** The exceptions only, Skylight, boy; the exceptions!

**SKYLIGHT (Rises and puts sock aside):** That was a good funeral today?

**IDRIS:** Aye! We buried him dacent, as the Paddies say.

**SKYLIGHT:** Strange, the way a man's destiny is all mapped out for him! To think that if I walk out that door this instant and never come back, it wouldn't make any difference, because it's all laid out, no matter what I do.

**IDRIS:** If you walked out that door, boy, old Idris wouldn't see you no more. What's got into you today?

**SKYLIGHT:** Oh . . . I've been thinkin' since we buried oul' Root . . .

**IDRIS:** What about?

**SKYLIGHT:** A girl! Long time ago, Idris!

**IDRIS:** She the one you never told me about?

**SKYLIGHT:** How did you know?

**IDRIS:** When it comes to you, boy, I'm good at guessing. Know you like a book, I do!

**SKYLIGHT:** Then, you don't know me at all, because you never read a book in your life!

**IDRIS:** I knew about the girl . . . what was she like?

**SKYLIGHT (Remembering):** What's the dawn like? Or what's a night that's full of stars like? I remember the first time I came to England. I was twenty. I came to make enough money to marry her. She died, though, and that was that. Good old T.B.; trying to look after eight kids while her mother was having more . . . Kathleen was her name. Kathleen Shanahan.

**IDRIS:** Nice name!

**SKYLIGHT:** Sometimes still I imagine her walking towards me down a bohareen at home, the haughty step of her and the laughter pouring out of her mouth. I was a good lad in those days, Idris. Worked twelve-hour days, seven days a week . . . for her! I remember shortly after she died I was coming to work at 5 o'clock one summer's mornin' and there was a red dawn breakin' in the east beyond Northampton. That was the hardest time of my life, Idris, because it was the most beautiful dawn I ever saw, and it reminded me of her! **(Changes tone abruptly):** What are you looking so mournful for, you stupid Welsh jackass?

**IDRIS:** Maybe I should have married Edwina. Couldn't be sure I was the man, though. When I was leaving she was six months pregnant.

**SKYLIGHT:** I bet that set the neighbours talking!

**IDRIS:** Don't be daft, man! Where I come from, if a girl married and she wasn't pregnant, people would say she was getting swanky.

(Enter **DEACON** from dormitory, dressed as he was at his first appearance in ACT I. He also carries a bag.)

**IDRIS:** Where are you going?

**DEACON:** I'm leaving . . . leaving . . . I've come into some cash from a maiden aunt on my dad's side of the family.

**IDRIS:** I'll bet you have!

**DEACON** (Producing substantial bundle of notes): This don't grow on trees. Here! (Peels off a note): Have a drink on the old deacon. I've got to rush. Can I let you chaps in on a secret . . . me an' Miss Butt is elopin' . . . spendin' the 'honeymoon in the South o' France, thanks to my dear old auntie.

**IDRIS** (Shakes his head): Well, I do hope you'll be most happy. We'll drink your health tonight. You seem panicky, lad! You're not being shotgunned, are you?

**DEACON:** Good Lord, no! Nothin' like that! I've been 'avin' nightmares lately . . . every night the same . . . my 'ands are tied, see, an' this big Irish Paddy is knockin' me abaht. He's got a 'ead like a gorilla an' a backside like a washin'-tub. 'E's got skin on 'is chest as tight as a drum an' arms like telegraph poles an' the nipples on 'is chest is three feet apart (Looks about him anxiously.) an' I'm gettin' nervous, so, if you don't mind, I'll be on my merry way. I'll send you a postcard from the South o' France.

(Exit **DEACON**.)

**IDRIS:** Know where he got the money, don't you?

**SKYLIGHT:** A fair idea, but I've a feelin' we'll soon find out more about it.

**IDRIS:** Well, he left us a quid, boy.

**SKYLIGHT:** We'll put it into old Root's collection.

**IDRIS:** Yes . . . the very thing! You know, Sky, there was something I've been meaning to tell you this past week but you were working so hard, I hadn't the heart.

**SKYLIGHT:** Well, out with it!

**IDRIS:** You remember Severn Trumpeter?

**SKYLIGHT:** Yes . . . what about him?

**IDRIS:** Won at 100 to 6, ten lengths, pulling up.

**SKYLIGHT:** Well, what did I tell you, Idris?

**IDRIS:** But he won!

**SKYLIGHT:** An' where d'you think he'd have been if you backed him? . . . Down the bloody field, of course!

(Enter **CLEMENT O'SHAUGHNESSY** from dormitory.)

**SKYLIGHT:** Well — how much did it amount to?

**IDRIS:** Here's another pound . . . a subscription from Deacon.

**CLEMENT:** But he already gave me a pound!

**SKYLIGHT:** Put it in!

(**CLEMENT** adds it to a sheaf of notes in his hand.)

**CLEMENT:** Between silver and notes, the total comes to forty-seven quid.

(**CLEMENT** places bag of silver and notes on the table.)

**CLEMENT:** It's not bad when you consider . . .

**SKYLIGHT:** When you consider what?

**CLEMENT:** Well, a lot of them couldn't afford any more . . . they have to send money home to wives and families, too, you know.

**SKYLIGHT:** There's hardly enough to get the body home, and what about his widow? What's she supposed to do — live on a few quid widow's pension?

**CLEMENT:** I know it's not enough, but you can't expect them to give any more. They did their best.

**IDRIS:** You better watch it or you'll miss your 'bus.

**CLEMENT:** I have a few minutes to spare all the time. Look! My week's pay . . . well, it amounts to seventeen pounds . . . you draw it for me, Skylight, and send it to Root's widow.

**IDRIS:** You don't have to do that . . . it's all you have!

**CLEMENT:** It's nothing! . . . it's a terribly cheap price to pay for getting out of here. I know now how old Root must have felt all the time he was here, only it was worse for him. There's no place like home, and what are a week's wages in a lifetime?

**SKYLIGHT:** That's decent of you!

**CLEMENT:** Forget it! I'm only sorry it isn't more. But maybe I'll get my mother's car and drive out to see Root's family some Sunday . . . my mother will come too . . . she's good like that, and she might be able to help. What I mean is, she has connections in the city, and if one of the kids was old enough to work, maybe she might be able to help . . .

**SKYLIGHT:** As a domestic, a servant . . . the very thing old Root didn't want! That's why he came to England.

**CLEMENT:** Well, my mother would only try to help!

**SKYLIGHT:** And will she replace old Root, or will she get a new husband for Mrs. Root?

**CLEMENT:** You talk as if you were blaming me for his death!

**IDRIS:** Skylight don't blame you, boy. It's just that he feels bad.

**SKYLIGHT:** I'm not blamin' you, but . . . somebody is to blame, only I don't know where to point the finger. Maybe we're all to blame. Maybe those back home are to blame . . . I don't know what . . . I only know that it was unnecessary, that it was a waste and a terrible shame, that he didn't have to die like that.

**CLEMENT:** I'd better fetch my bags . . . I don't want to be late . . . my mother would be disappointed. (He is exiting.)

**SKYLIGHT:** Clement!

**CLEMENT (Turning):** Yes!

**SKYLIGHT:** You've been a good lad these past few days. You're all right, boy! Now, go in and get your damn bags.

(CLEMENT exits, smiling.)

**IDRIS:** You're getting soft, boy . . . old age is catching up on you.

**SKYLIGHT:** That's the truest word you ever spoke. We're both getting old and it's lonely, Idris. Sometimes it can be woefully lonely.

**IDRIS:** Aye, it's lonely, and the older we get the lonelier we'll be. I wouldn't mind being his age again. You don't see the future so clearly, and that's a good thing.

**SKYLIGHT:** Cheer up, you stupid Welshman! We have a lot to be thankful for. We haven't any mother-in-law and we haven't any wives and we haven't any families, and you haven't any brains.

IDRIS: Families! That's something I'll never know; about Edwina and me.  
SKYLIGHT: If there was a child, it'll be all right. If it's a girl she can always lead some poor fool to the altar.

IDRIS (Sadly): And if there was a boy . . . a little chap like me?

SKYLIGHT: Well, if he's like you, he'll be O.K. He'll be so damned stupid that he won't worry about himself.

IDRIS: I don't know! I often wonder, Skylight, and it gets me in here (Points to heart.) She wasn't a bad-looking lass. She had blonde hair . . . snow-white almost . . . natural, too. You suppose, if she had a boy, he'd have blonde hair?

SKYLIGHT: Hold it!

(DARBY HOGAN storms into the hut, wild-eyed and nervous. He hurries to dormitory without saluting IDRIS or SKYLIGHT. Exit DARBY HOGAN to dormitory.)

IDRIS: He's in a hurry!

SKYLIGHT: He done that robbery . . . you know that, don't you?

IDRIS: Everybody knows that! That's one man I wouldn't like to have behind me in the dark.

SKYLIGHT: You wouldn't have a chance!

IDRIS: You could take him!

SKYLIGHT: No! . . . he carries a knife. It wouldn't be worth it.

IDRIS: What do you suppose happened?

SKYLIGHT: Don't know for sure. Have you heard anything about the chap that was robbed?

IDRIS: Last I heard he was unconscious . . . Paddy, too, he was. Married man, I hear tell, with kids on top of it.

SKYLIGHT: Well, I'll lay a pound to a penny that the man's just died! The heat is on! I'll bet he's getting out of here in one hell of a hurry.

(Enter CLEMENT, with bags, from dormitory.)

CLEMENT: What's the matter with him? He's like a maniac! I thought he was going to attack me. I think he might have struck me if I stayed in there. I never even said a word to him and for no reason in the world he pushed me aside and spat at me. Here he comes now!

(Enter DARBY, from dormitory, with his bag of possessions. He allows CLEMENT to re-enter again. DARBY stands still, cautiously, upon entering and then suddenly springs across the hut to where the Radiogram is. He lays the shopping-bag down and suddenly draws his knife.)

DARBY: One move, and I'll fillet the man who makes it. I mean it! Stand back!

SKYLIGHT: Let him be! He'll get his.

(Cautiously, DARBY lifts the Radiogram, knife pointed towards pair. He places hand underneath and, as he feels, looks of anger and frustration appear on his face. Wonder replaces these when he draws forth nothing but a sheet of paper. He looks at it in wonder, peruses it, then crushes it in fury and with a grunt of disgust, throws it to the floor before exiting viciously.)

DARBY: They'll never catch me! No bloody farmer is goin' to read about me in his mornin' paper!

(Exit DARBY HOGAN.)

SKYLIGHT: See what's written on the scrap o' paper.

(IDRIS picks it up and reads.)

IDRIS (Reading): "Beware the bark of the elephant and the fury of the whales . . . The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away."



(Laughter from both.)

IDRIS: So that's where he had the money? Not very bright, was he, with the Deacon around.

SKYLIGHT: He wasn't a very bright man! (Goes to table where money is.) Forty-eight quid and a week's wages . . . a small reward for a lifetime! I can't stop thinking about Root's family. You know, Idris, I had an idea . . . ah, but what's the use? You'd never agree anyway.

IDRIS: You want we should draw the money out of the Post Office, eh?

SKYLIGHT: Yes, but . . .!

IDRIS: And you were thinking, weren't you, that it would be a fine thing if we sent it to old Root's woman? But you were afraid of Idris, weren't you? What do you think that Idris is — a bloody bailiff, is it? I never wanted to be a bookmaker anyway.

SKYLIGHT: What do you say, then?

IDRIS: Done, man! . . . Done! (Shakes hands with Skylight.) I think, maybe, after this, we should get our heads examined. No use in putting it off any longer!

SKYLIGHT: You're sure you don't mind?

IDRIS: No! . . . In a way, I'm glad! Because, maybe, there's a little one of Idris Mortimer's . . . you know what, I'm paying my debts, so to speak. I wouldn't give a copper to a blind man, but this is different.

SKYLIGHT: Yes . . . I know! I have another good idea. We work here another few weeks and put enough aside for a trip to Ascot.

IDRIS: Ascot! Aye! . . . and get two of them top-hats, maybe, and stay at the best hotel. If we study form carefully, might pick ourselves a couple of good winners.

SKYLIGHT: We could still have a hundred apiece starting. We draw fifty quid and send it to Missus Root.

IDRIS: I thought you was going to give her all the money?

SKYLIGHT: And so I was . . . so I was!

IDRIS (Seriously): But first thoughts is never wise, eh!

SKYLIGHT: First thoughts are foolish! She's got forty-seven in the collection. There's the seventeen from Clement. That's sixty-four quid. We give her thirty-six and she's got a hundred. Thirty-six quid is a lot of money.

IDRIS: But I thought we was giving her fifty?

SKYLIGHT: First thoughts is foolish.

IDRIS: Aye, and we never give nobody thirty-six quid before!

SKYLIGHT: We don't have to.

IDRIS: Aye, and if we was dishonest what would be to stop us from skipping with the whole collection? Eh? Nobody would never catch us. It ain't legal money.

SKYLIGHT: This is one time we don't skip. She gets her hundred.

IDRIS: Aye, but it'd be a nasty habit if we was to make a practice o' this!

SKYLIGHT: Not bloody likely!

IDRIS: You sure we're going to Ascot?

SKYLIGHT: You an' me, Idris.

IDRIS: Meet a few bits o' tail, maybe. Get a couple o' posh ones this time.

SKYLIGHT: You'll see the Queen.

IDRIS: Aye! And I bet you, she turn round to the Duke and say: "Who is that good-looking chap with the grey topper talking to Skylight Maginty from

Ireland? and the Duke he say: "Why, my dear, that are none other than Idris Mortimer from Carmarthen!"

(Enter CLEMENT, from dormitory.)

CLEMENT: Well, it's almost time . . .

SKYLIGHT: We'll take the bags. See you as far as the bus-stop.

CLEMENT: I don't suppose we'll see each other again?

SKYLIGHT: It's not likely.

CLEMENT: I won't forget you.

SKYLIGHT: You will! They've all forgotten about us.

CLEMENT: Don't say that! It's not true!

SKYLIGHT: Sure! . . . some night when you get drunk you'll tell your fellow-students about the strange Irish characters you met in England.

(IDRIS and SKYLIGHT take a suitcase each.)

CLEMENT: I won't forget you if that's what you mean!

SKYLIGHT (Preparing to exit): Tell them instead, we're the hopeless ones, the God-forsaken ones. Tell them we're always lonely here. We're not Jack or Tom or Mick. We're Paddy! Tell them we want a place at home and they needn't think they're doing us a favour, because it's us, the Irish buck-navvies that's been keeping your poor in bread and butter over the bad years. It's us that sent home the dough when the politicians were barking like the Deacon's elephants. Every time, boy, you see a sad-faced woman at home handing an English pound to an Irish shopkeeper, bow your head. Let you pray then for the soul of old Root and men like him who fell for the love of a small home in Ireland.

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